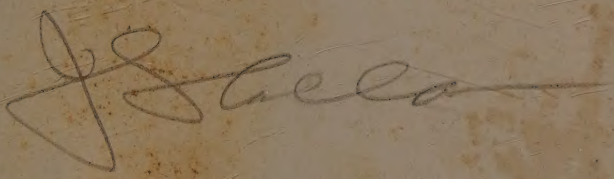

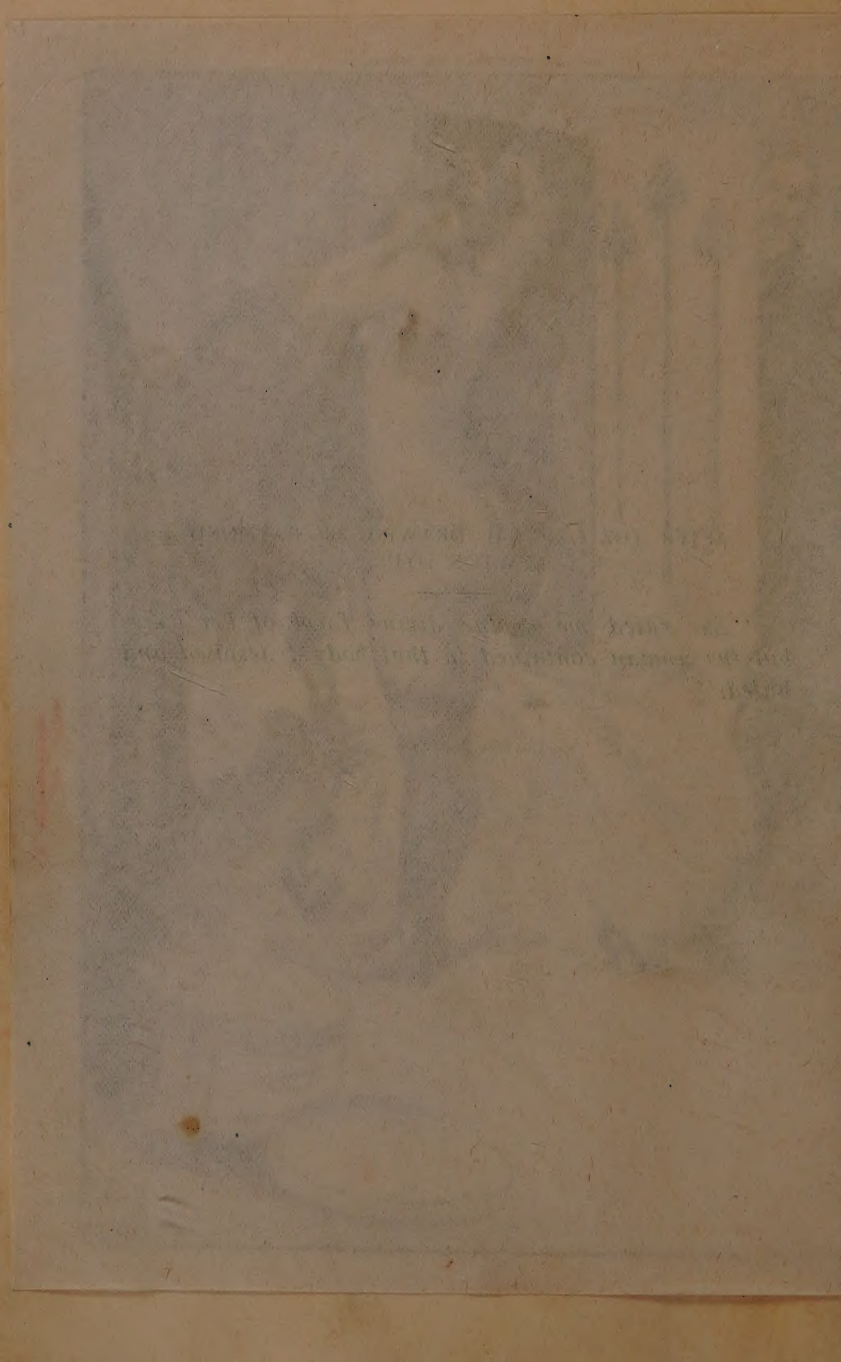

SHORT STORIES

OF THE

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY OF LIFE

BY

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

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FRANCESCA AND CARLOTTA RONDOLI

I.

No (said my friend Charles Jouvent), I do not know Italy. I started to see it thoroughly twice, but each time I was stopped at the frontier and could not manage to get any further. And yet my two attempts gave me charming ideas of the manners of that beautiful country. Some time or other I must visit its cities, as well as the museums and works of art with which it abounds. I shall make another attempt to penetrate into the interior, which I have not yet succeeded in doing.

You don't understand me, so I will explain myself. In the spring of 1874 I was seized with an irresistible desire to see Venice, Florence, Rome, and Naples. I am not, as you know, a great traveler; it appears to me a useless and fatiguing business. Nights spent in a train, the disturbed slumbers of the railway carriage, with the attendant headache and stiffness in every limb, the sudden waking in that rolling box, the

unwashed feeling, your eyes and hair full of dust, the smell of the coal on which one's lungs feed, and the bad dinners in draughty refreshment rooms, are, according to my ideas, a horrible way of beginning a pleasure trip.

After this introduction by the express, we have the miseries of the hotel; of some great hotel full of people, and yet so empty; the strange room, and the dubious bed! I am most particular about my bed; it is the sanctuary of life. We intrust our almost nude and fatigued bodies to it that they may be reanimated by reposing between soft sheets and feathers.

There we find the most delightful hours of our existence, the hours of love and of sleep. The bed is sacred, and should be respected, venerated, and loved by us as the best and most delightful of our earthly possessions.

I cannot lift up the sheets of a hotel bed without a shiver of disgust. Who were its occupants the night before? Perhaps dirty, revolting people have slept in it. I begin, then, to think of all the horrible people with whom one rubs shoulders every day, people with suspicious-looking skins, who carry about with them the sickening smell of garlic or of humanity. I think of the deformed and purulent, of the perspiration emanating from the sick, and of everything that is ugly in man.

And all this, perhaps, in the bed in which I am going to sleep! The mere idea of it makes me feel ill as I get in.

And then the hotel dinners—those dreary *table d'hôte* dinners in the midst of all sorts of extraordinary people, or else those terrible solitary dinners at

a small table in a restaurant, feebly lighted up by a wretched composite candle under a shade.

Again, those terribly dull evenings in some unknown town! Do you know anything more wretched than when it is getting dark on such an occasion? You go about as if in a dream, looking at faces which you have never seen before and will never see again; listening to people talking about matters which are either quite indifferent to you or in a language that perhaps you do not understand. You have a terrible feeling, almost as if you were lost, and you continue to walk on, so as to avoid returning to the hotel, where you would feel still more lost because you are *at home*, in a home which belongs to anyone who can pay for it. At last you fall into a chair of some well-lit *café*, whose gilding and lights overwhelm you a thousand times more than the shadows in the streets. Then you feel so abominably lonely sitting in front of the glass of flat *bock*,* that a kind of madness seizes you, the longing to go somewhere or other, no matter where, as long as you need not remain in front of that marble table and in the dazzling brightness.

And then, suddenly, you perceive that you are really alone in the world, always and everywhere; and that in places which we know the familiar jostlings give us the illusion only of human fraternity. At such moments of self-abandonment and somber isolation in distant cities you think broadly, clearly, and profoundly. Then one suddenly sees the whole

* Munich beer, often brewed in France. It is much affected by the Parisians in summer.

of life outside the vision of eternal hope, outside the deceptions of innate habits and of expectations of happiness, which we indulge in dreams never to be realized.

It is only by going a long distance that we can fully understand how short-lived and empty everything near at hand is; only by searching for the unknown do we perceive how commonplace and evanescent everything is; only by wandering over the face of the earth can we understand how small the world is, and how very much alike everywhere.

How well I know, and how I hate and almost fear those haphazard walks through unknown streets. This was the reason why, as nothing would induce me to undertake a tour in Italy by myself, I made up my mind to accompany my friend Paul Pavilly.

You know Paul, and how woman is everything, the world, life itself, to him. There are many men like him, to whom existence becomes poetical and idealized by the presence of women. The earth is inhabitable only because they are there; the sun shines and is warm because it lights upon them; the air is soft and balmy because it blows upon their skin and ruffles the short hair on their temples, and the moon is charming because it makes them dream, and imparts a languorous charm to love. Every act and action of Paul has woman for its motive; all his thoughts, all his efforts, and hopes are centered on them.

When I mentioned Italy to Paul he at first absolutely refused to leave Paris. I, however, began to tell him of the adventures I had on my travels. I assured him that all Italian women are charming, and I

made him hope for the most refined society at Naples, thanks to certain letters of introduction which I had. So at last he allowed himself to be persuaded.

II.

We took the express one Thursday evening, Paul and I. Hardly anyone goes south at that time of the year, so that we had the carriage to ourselves. Both of us were in a bad temper on leaving Paris, sorry for having yielded to the temptation of this journey, and regretting Marly, the Seine, and our lazy boating excursions, and all those pleasures in and near Paris which are so dear to every true Parisian.

As soon as the train started Paul retreated into a corner, and said: "It is most idiotic to go all this way." As it was too late for him to change his mind then, I answered: "Well, you should not have come."

He did not respond, and I felt very much inclined to laugh when I saw how furious he looked. He always resembled a squirrel, but then every one of us has retained the type of some animal or other as the mark of primal race. How many people have jaws like a bulldog, or heads like goats, rabbits, foxes, horses, or oxen. Paul was a squirrel turned into a man. He had its bright, quick eyes, its hair, its pointed nose, its small, fine, supple, active body, and a certain mysterious resemblance in his general bearing: in fact, a similarity of movements, of gestures. and of bearing which might almost be taken for an atavism.

At last we both went to sleep — the uncomfortable slumber of the railway carriage, which is broken by horrible cramps in the arms and neck, and by the sudden stoppages of the train.

We woke up as we were going along the Rhône. Soon the continued noise of the grasshoppers came in through the window, a cry which seems to be the voice of the warm earth, the song of Provence. It seemed to instill into our looks, our breasts, and our souls the light and happy feeling of the south, the odor of the parched earth, of the stony and light soil of the olive, with its gray-green foliage.

When the train stopped again a porter ran along the train calling out "Valence" in a sonorous voice, with an accent that again gave us that taste of Provence which the shrill note of the grasshoppers had already imparted to us.

Nothing fresh happened till we got to Marseilles, where we breakfasted, but when we returned to our carriage we found a woman installed there.

Paul, with a delighted look at me, gave his short mustache a mechanical twirl, and passed his fingers through his hair, which had become slightly disordered with the night's journey. Then he sat down opposite the newcomer.

Whenever I happen to see a striking new face, either while traveling or in society, I always have the strongest inclination to find out what character, mind, and intellectual capacities are hidden beneath those features.

She was a young and pretty woman, a native of the south of France certainly, with splendid eyes, beautiful, wavy black hair, which was so thick, long,

and strong that it seemed almost too heavy for her head. She was dressed with a certain southern bad taste which made her look a little vulgar. Her regular features had none of the grace and finish of the refined races, of that slight delicacy which members of the aristocracy inherit from their birth, and which is the hereditary mark of blue blood.

Her bracelets were too big to be of gold; she wore earrings with large white stones which were certainly not diamonds, and she belonged unmistakably to the *bourgeoisie*. You would guess that she would talk too loud, and use exaggerated gestures.

When the train started she remained motionless in her place, in the attitude of a woman who was in a rage, and did not look at us.

Paul began to talk to me, evidently with an eye to effect, trying to attract her attention, as shopkeepers expose their choice wares to catch the notice of passers-by.

She, however, did not appear to be paying the least attention.

"Toulon! Ten minutes to wait! Refreshment room!" the porter shouted.

Paul motioned to me to get out, and, as soon as we had done so, he said:

"I wonder who on earth she can be?"

I began to laugh. "I am sure I don't know, and I don't in the least care."

He was quite excited.

"She is an uncommonly fresh and pretty girl. What eyes she has, and how cross she looks. She must have been dreadfully worried, for she takes no notice of anything."

"You will have all your trouble for nothing," I growled.

He began to lose his temper.

"I am not taking any trouble, my dear fellow. I think her an extremely pretty woman, that is all. If one could only speak to her! But I don't know how to begin. Can't you give me an idea? Can't you guess who she is?"

"Upon my word, I cannot. I rather think she is some strolling actress who is going to rejoin her company after some love adventure."

He seemed quite upset, as if I had said something insulting.

"What makes you think that? On the contrary, I think she looks most respectable."

"Just look at her bracelets," I said, "her earrings, and her whole dress. I should not be the least surprised if she were a dancer or a circus rider, but most likely a dancer. Her whole style smacks very much of the theater."

He evidently did not like the idea.

"She is much too young, I am sure; why, she is hardly twenty."

"Well," I replied, "there are many things which one can do before one is twenty; dancing and reciting are among them, without counting another business which is, perhaps, her sole occupation."

"Take your seats for Nice, Vintimiglia," the guards and porters called out.

We got in; our fellow-passenger was eating an orange, and certainly did not do it in a refined way. She had spread her pocket-handkerchief on her knees, and the way in which she tore off the peel and

opened her mouth to put in the pieces, and then spat the pips out of the window, showed that her education had been decidedly vulgar. She seemed more put out than ever, and swallowed the fruit with an exceedingly comic air of rage.

Paul devoured her with his eyes, and tried to attract her attention and excite her curiosity, but in spite of his talk and of the manner in which he brought in well-known names, she did not pay the least attention to him.

After passing Fréjus and St. Raphael, the train passes through a veritable garden, a paradise of roses, of groves of oranges and lemons covered with fruit and flowers at the same time. That delightful coast from Marseilles to Genoa is a kingdom of perfumes in a continent of flowers.

June is the time to see it in all its beauty, when in every narrow valley and on every slope the most exquisite flowers are growing luxuriantly. And the roses! fields, hedges, groves of roses! They climb up the walls, blossom on the roofs, hang from the trees, peep out from among the bushes; they are white, red, yellow, large and small, single, with a simple monotone of dress, or full and heavy in brilliant toilettes. Their continual perfume makes the air heavy and relaxing, while the still more penetrating odor of the orange blossoms sweetens the atmosphere, till it might almost be called a sugarplum for the olfactory nerve.

The shore, with its brown rocks, was bathed by the motionless Mediterranean. The hot summer sun stretched like a fiery cloth over the mountains, over the long expanses of sand, and over the hard, set

blue sea. The train went on, through the tunnels, along the slopes, above the water, on straight, wall-like viaducts, and a soft, vague, saltish smell came up, a smell of drying seaweed, mingled at times with the strong, heavy perfume of the flowers.

But Paul neither saw, nor looked at, nor smelled anything, for our fellow-traveler engrossed all his attention.

When we got to Cannes, as he wished to speak to me, he signed to me to get out again, and as soon as I had done so he took me by the arm.

"Do you know she is really charming. Just look at her eyes; and I never saw anything like her hair."

"Don't excite yourself," I replied. "Tackle her, if you have any intentions that way. She does not look impregnable, I fancy, although she appears to be a little bit grumpy."

"Why don't you speak to her?" he said. "I don't know what to say, for I am always terribly stupid at first; I can never make advances to a woman in the street. I follow them, go round and round them, quite close to them, but I never know what to say at first. I only once tried to enter into conversation with a woman in that way. As I clearly saw that she was waiting for me to make overtures, and as I felt bound to say something, I stammered out, 'I hope you are quite well, Madame?' She laughed in my face, and I made my escape."

I promised Paul to do all I could to bring about a conversation, and when we had taken our places again, I politely asked our neighbor:

"Have you any objection to the smell of tobacco, Madame?"

She merely replied: *"Non capisco."* *

So she was an Italian! I felt an absurd inclination to laugh. As Paul did not understand a word of that language, I was obliged to act as his interpreter, so I said in Italian:

"I asked you, Madame, whether you had any objection to tobacco smoke?"

With an angry look she replied, *"Che mi fa?"* †

She had neither turned her head nor looked at me, and I really did not know whether to take this "What does it matter to me," for an authorization, a refusal, a real sign of indifference, or for a mere "Leave me alone."

"Madame," I replied, "if you mind the smell of tobacco in the least—"

She again said, *"Mica,"* ‡ in a tone of voice which seemed to mean, "I wish to goodness you would leave me alone!" It was, however, a kind of permission, so I said to Paul:

"You can smoke."

He looked at me in that curious sort of way that people have when they try to understand others who are talking in a strange language before them, and asked me:

"What did you say to her?"

"I asked if we might smoke, and she said we might do whatever we liked."

Whereupon I lighted my cigar.

"Did not she say anything more?"

---

* I do not understand.

† What does it matter to me?

‡ Not at all.

"If you had counted her words you would have noticed that she used exactly six, two of which gave me to understand that she knew no French, so four remained, and a lot can be said in four words."

Paul seemed quite unhappy, disappointed, and "at sea," so to speak.

But suddenly the Italian asked me, in that tone of discontent which seemed habitual to her, "Do you know at what time we shall get to Genoa?"

"At eleven o'clock," I replied. Then after a moment I went on:

"My friend and I are also going to Genoa, and if we can be of any service to you, we shall be very happy, as you are quite alone." But she interrupted with such a "*Mica,*" that I did not venture on another word.

"What did she say?" Paul asked.

"She said that she thought you were charming."

But he was in no humor for joking, and begged me, dryly, not to make fun of him, so I translated her question and my polite offer, which had been so rudely rejected.

Then he became as agitated as a squirrel in a cage.

"If we only knew," he said, "what hotel she was going to, we would go to the same. Try and find out, so as to have another opportunity for making her speak."

It was not particularly easy, and I did not know what pretext to invent, anxious as I was to make the acquaintance of this unapproachable person.

We passed Nice, Monaco, Mentone, and the train stopped at the frontier for the examination of luggage.

Although I hate those badly brought-up people who breakfast and dine in railway-carriages, I went and bought a quantity of good things to make one last attack on her by their means. I felt sure that this girl must, ordinarily, be by no means inaccessible. Something had put her out and made her irritable, but very little would suffice, a mere word or some agreeable offer, to decide her and overcome her.

We started again, and we three were still alone. I spread my eatables out on the seat. I cut up the fowl, put the slices of ham neatly on a piece of paper, and then carefully laid out our dessert, the strawberries, plums, cherries, and cakes, close to the girl.

When she saw that we were going to eat she took a piece of chocolate and two little crisp cakes out of her pocket and began to munch them.

"Ask her to have some of ours," Paul said in a whisper.

"That is exactly what I want to do, but it is rather a difficult matter."

As she, however, glanced from time to time at our provisions, I felt sure that she would still be hungry when she had finished what she had. So as soon as her frugal meal was over, I said to her:

"It would be very kind of you if you would take some of this fruit."

Again she said "*Mica,*" but less crossly than before.

"Well, then," I said, "may I offer you a little wine? I see you have not drunk anything. It is Italian wine, and as we are now in your own country, we should be very pleased to see such a pretty Italian mouth accept the offer of its French neighbors."

She shook her head slightly, evidently wishing to refuse, but very desirous of accepting, and her "*Mica*" this time was almost polite. I took the bottle, which was covered with straw in the Italian fashion, and filling the glass I offered it to her.

"Please drink it," I said, "to bid us welcome to your country."

She took the glass with her usual look, and emptied it at a draught, like a woman tormented with thirst, and then gave it back to me without even saying "Thank you."

Then I offered her the cherries. "Please take some," I said; "we shall be so pleased if you will."

Out of her corner she looked at all the fruit spread out beside her, and said so rapidly that I could scarcely follow her: "*A me non piacciono ne le cirliegie ne le susine; amo soltano le fragole.*"

"What does she say?" Paul asked.

"That she does not care for cherries or plums, but only for strawberries."

I put a newspaper full of wild strawberries on her lap, and she ate them quickly, throwing them into her mouth from some distance in a coquettish and charming manner.

When she had finished the little red heap which we had seen rapidly diminishing, crushed and disappearing under the rapid action of her hands, I asked her:

"What may I offer you now?"

"I will take a little chicken," she replied.

She certainly devoured half of it, tearing it to pieces with the rapid movements of her jaws like some carnivorous animal. Then she made up her

mind to have some cherries, which she "did not like," then some plums, then some little cakes. Then she said, "I have had enough," and sat back in her corner.

I was much amused, and tried to make her eat more, pressing her, in fact, till she suddenly got in a rage again, and flung such a furious "*Mica*" at me, that I would no longer run the risk of spoiling her digestion.

I turned to my friend. "My poor Paul," I said, "I am afraid we have had our trouble for nothing."

The night came on, one of those hot summer nights which extend their warm shade over the burning and exhausted earth. Here and there, in the distance by the sea, over capes and promontories bright stars began to shine on the dark horizon, which I was, at times, almost inclined to confound with lighthouses.

The scent of the orange-trees became more penetrating, and we breathed with delight, distending our lungs to inhale it more deeply. The balmy air was soft, delicious, almost divine.

Suddenly I noticed something like a shower of stars under the dense shade of the trees along the line where it was quite dark. It might have been taken for drops of light, leaping, flying, playing, and running among the leaves, or for small stars fallen from the skies in order to have an excursion on the earth; but they were only fireflies dancing a strange fiery ballet in the perfumed air.

One of them happened to come into our carriage and shed its intermittent light, which seemed to be extinguished one moment and to be burning the next. I covered the carriage-lamp with its blue shade and

watched the strange fly careering about in its fiery flight. Suddenly it settled on the dark hair of our neighbor, who was half dozing after dinner. Paul seemed delighted, with his eyes fixed on the bright, sparkling spot which looked like a living jewel on the forehead of the sleeping woman.

The Italian awaked about eleven o'clock, with the bright insect still in her hair. When I saw her move, I said: "We are just getting to Genoa, Madame," and she murmured, without answering me, as if possessed by some obstinate and embarrassing thought:

"What am I going to do, I wonder?"

And then she suddenly asked:

"Would you like me to come with you?"

I was so taken aback that I really did not understand her.

"With us? What do you mean?"

She repeated, looking more and more furious:

"Would you like me to go with you now, as soon as we get out of the train?"

"I am quite willing; but where do you want to go to? Where shall I take you to?"

She shrugged her shoulders with an air of supreme indifference.

"Wherever you like; what does it matter to me?" She repeated her *"Che mi fa?"* twice.

"But we are going to the hotel."

"Very well, let us all go to the hotel," she said, in a contemptuous voice.

I turned to Paul, and said:

"She wants to know if we should like her to come with us."

My friend's utter surprise restored my self-possession. He stammered:

"With us? Where to? What for? How?"

"I don't know, but she made this strange proposal to me in a most irritable voice. I told her that we were going to the hotel, and she said: 'Very well, let us all go there!' I suppose she is without a half-penny. She certainly has a very strange way of making acquaintances."

Paul, who was very much excited, exclaimed:

"I am quite agreeable. Tell her that we will take her wherever she likes." Then, after a moment's hesitation, he said uneasily:

"We must know, however, with whom she wants to go,—with you or with me?"

I turned to the Italian, who did not even seem to be listening to us, and said:

"We shall be very happy to take you with us, but my friend wants to know whether you will take my arm or his?"

She opened her black eyes wide with vague surprise, and said, *"Che mi fa?"*

I was obliged to explain myself. "In Italy, I believe when a man looks after a woman, fulfills all her wishes, and satisfies all her caprices, he is called a *patito*. Which of us two will you take for your *patito?*"

Without the slightest hesitation she replied:

"You!"

I turned to Paul. "You see, my friend, she chooses me; you have no chance."

"All the better for you," he replied, in a rage. Then, after thinking for a few moments, he went on:

"Do you really care about taking this creature with you? She will spoil our journey. What are we to do with this woman, who looks like I don't know what? They will not take us in at any decent hotel."

I, however, just began to find the Italian much nicer than I had thought her at first, and I was now very anxious to take her with us. The idea delighted me. I already felt those little shivers which expectation sends through the veins.

I replied, "My dear fellow, we have accepted, and it is too late to recede. You were the first to advise me to say 'Yes.'"

"It is very stupid," he growled, "but do as you please."

The train whistled, slackened speed, and we ran into the station.

I got out of the carriage, and offered my new companion my hand. She jumped out lightly, and I gave her my arm, which she took with an air of seeming repugnance. As soon as we had claimed our luggage we started off into the town, Paul walking in utter silence.

"To what hotel shall we go?" I asked him. "It may be difficult to get into the City of Paris Hotel with a woman, especially with this Italian."

Paul interrupted me: "Yes, with an Italian who looks more like a strumpet than a duchess. However, that is no business of mine. Do just as you please."

I was in a state of perplexity. I had written to the City of Paris Hotel to reserve our rooms, and now I did not know what to do.

Two *commissionnaires* followed us with our luggage. I continued: "You might as well go on first, and say that we are coming; and give the landlord to understand that I have a — a friend with me, so that we should like rooms quite by themselves for us three, so as not to be brought in contact with other travelers. He will understand, and we will decide according to his answer."

But Paul growled, "Thank you; such sorts of commissions and such parts do not suit me by any means. I did not come here to get ready your apartments or to minister to your pleasures."

But I was urgent: "Look here, don't be angry. It is surely far better to go to a good hotel than to a bad one, and it is not difficult to ask the landlord for three separate bedrooms and a dining-room."

I put a stress on *three,* and that decided him.

He went on first, and I saw him go into the large hotel while I remained on the other side of the street dragging along my fair Italian, who did not say a word, and followed by the porters with the luggage.

Paul came back at last, looking as dissatisfied as my companion.

"That is settled," he said, "and they will take us in; but there are only two bed-rooms. You must settle it as you can."

I followed him, rather ashamed of going in with such a strange companion.

There were two bedrooms separated by a small sitting-room. I ordered a cold supper, and then I turned to the Italian with a perplexed look.

"We have only been able to get two rooms, so you must choose which you like."

She replied with her eternal *"Che mi fa?"* I thereupon took up her little black wooden box, just like those which servants use, and took it into the room on the right, which I had chosen for her. A bit of paper was fastened on to the box, on which was written, "Mademoiselle Francesca Rondoli, Genoa."

"Your name is Francesca?" I asked, and she nodded her head, without replying.

"We shall have supper directly," I continued. "Meanwhile, I daresay you would like to arrange your dress a little?"

She answered with a *"Mica,"* a phrase which she employed just as frequently as *"Che mi fa,"* but I went on: "It is always pleasant after a journey."

Then I suddenly remembered that she had not, perhaps, the necessary objects, for she appeared to me in a very singular position, as if she had just escaped from some disagreeable adventure, and I brought her my dressing-case.

I put out all the little instruments for cleanliness and comfort which it contained: a nailbrush, a new toothbrush,—for I always carry a selection of them about with me,—my nail-scissors, a nail-file, and sponges. I uncorked a bottle of Eau de Cologne, one of lavender-water, and a little bottle of new-mown hay, so that she might have a choice. Then I opened my powder-box, and put out the powder-puff, put my fine towels over the water-jug, and placed a piece of new soap near the basin.

She watched my movements with a vexed look in her wide-open eyes, without appearing either astonished or satisfied at my forethought.

"Here is all that you require," I then said; "I will tell you when supper is ready."

When I returned to the sitting-room I found that Paul had taken possession of the other room, and had shut himself in, so I sat down to wait.

A waiter went backward and forward, bringing plates and glasses. He laid the table slowly, then put a cold fowl on it, and told me that all was ready.

I knocked gently at Mademoiselle Rondoli's door. "Come in," she said, and when I did so I was struck by a strong, heavy smell of perfumes, as if I were in a hairdresser and perfumer's shop.

The Italian was sitting on her box in an attitude either of thoughtful discontent or absent-mindedness. The towel was still folded over the water-jug which was quite full, and the soap, untouched and dry, was lying beside the empty basin; but one would have thought that the young woman had drunk half of the bottles of scent. The Eau de Cologne, however, had been spared, as only about a third of it had gone; but to make up for that she had used a surprising amount of lavender-water and new-mown hay. A cloud of violet-powder, a vague white mist, seemed still to be floating in the air, from the effects of her over-powdering her face and neck. It seemed to cover her eyelashes, eyebrows, and the hair on her temples like snow, while her cheeks were plastered with it, and layers of it covered her nostrils, the corners of her eyes, and her chin.

When she got up she exhaled such a strong odor of scent that it almost made me feel faint.

When we sat down to supper I found that Paul was in a most execrable temper, and I could get

nothing out of him but blame, irritable words, and disagreeable compliments.

Mademoiselle Francesca ate like an ogre, and as soon as she had finished her meal she threw herself upon the sofa. As for me, I saw the decisive moment approaching for settling how we were to apportion the rooms. I determined to take the bull by the horns, and sitting down by the Italian I said gallantly, kissing her hand:

"As we have only two bedrooms, will you allow me to share yours with you?"

"Do just as you like," she said. "It is all the same to me. *Che mi fa?*"

Her indifference vexed me.

"But you are sure you do not mind my being in your room with you?" I said.

"It is all the same to me; do just as you like."

"Should you like to go to bed at once?"

"Yes; I am very sleepy."

She got up, yawned, gave Paul her hand, who took it with a furious look, and I lighted her into our room. A disquieting feeling haunted me. "Here is all you want," I said again.

This time I took care to pour half the water into the basin, and to put a towel near the soap.

Then I went back to Paul. As soon as I got into the room, he said, "You have got a nice sort of a thing there!" and I answered, laughing, "My dear friend, don't speak ill of sour grapes," and he replied, ill-temperedly:

"Just take care how this ends, my good fellow."

I almost trembled with that feeling of fear which assails us after some suspicious love escapade—that

fear which spoils our pleasant meetings, our unexpected caresses, our chance kisses. However, I put a bold face on the matter. "At any rate, the girl is no adventuress."

But the fellow had me in his power; he had seen the shadow of my anxiety on my face.

"What do you know about her? You really astonish me. You pick up an Italian woman traveling alone by railway, and she volunteers, with most singular cynicism, to go and be your mistress in the first hotel you come to. You take her with you, and then you declare that she is not a——! And you persuade yourself that you are not running more risk than if you were to go and spend the night with a woman who had measles."

He laughed with an unpleasant and angry laugh. I sat down, a prey to uneasiness. What was I to do, for he was right after all? And a struggle began within me, between desire and fear.

He went on: "Do as you like, I have warned you, so do not complain of the consequences."

But I saw an ironical gaiety in his eyes, such a delight in his revenge, and he made fun of me so jovially that I did not hesitate any longer. I gave him my hand, and said, "Good night. You know the old saying: 'A victory without peril is a triumph without glory,' and upon my word, the victory is worth the danger."

And with a firm step I went into Francesca's room.

I stopped short at the door in surprise and astonishment. She was already asleep. Sleep had overcome her when she had finished undressing, and she

was reposing in the charming attitude of one of Titian's women.

It seemed as if she had lain down from sheer fatigue in order to take off her stockings, for they were lying on the bed. Then she had thought of something pleasant, no doubt, for she had waited to finish her reverie before moving, and then, closing her eyes, she had lost consciousness. A nightgown, embroidered about the neck such as one buys in cheap, ready-made shops, was lying on a chair.

She was charming, young, firm, and fresh.

There is nothing prettier than a pretty woman asleep, and in a moment, seeing her thus in all her naïve charms, I was going to forget my friend's prudent counsels, but suddenly turning to the toilette-table I saw everything in the same state as I had left it, and I sat down, anxious, and a prey to irresolution.

I remained thus for a long time, not able to make up my mind what to do. Retreat was impossible, and I must either pass the night on a chair, or go to bed myself at my own risk and peril.

I had no thoughts of sleeping either here or there, for my head was too excited and my eyes too occupied.

I moved about without stopping, feverish, uncomfortable, enervated. Then I began to reason with myself, certainly with a view to capitulation: "If I lie down that does not bind me to anything, and I shall certainly be more comfortable on a mattress than on a chair."

I undressed slowly, and then, stepping over the sleeping girl, I stretched myself out against the wall, turning my back on temptation.

In this position I remained for a long time without going to sleep, when suddenly my neighbor awaked She opened her eyes with astonishment, and still with that discontented look in them; then perceiving that she was undressed, she got up and calmly put on her nightgown with as much indifference as if I had not been present.

Returning, she did not trouble herself at all about me, and immediately went quietly to sleep again with her head resting on her right arm.

As for me, I began to meditate on human weakness and fatuity, and then I went to sleep also.

She got up early, like a woman who is used to work in the morning. She woke me up by doing so, and I watched her through my half-closed eyelids.

She came and went without hurrying herself, as if she were astonished at having nothing to do. At length she went to the toilette-table, and in a moment she emptied all the scent that remained in my bottles. She certainly also used some water, but very little.

When she was quite dressed she sat down on her box again, and holding one knee between her hands, seemed to be thinking.

At that moment I first pretended to notice her, and said:

"Good morning, Francesca."

Without seeming in at all a better temper than the previous night, she murmured, "Good morning."

When I asked her whether she had slept well, she nodded "Yes," and jumping out of bed, I went and kissed her.

She turned her face toward me like a child who is being kissed against its will; but I took her tenderly in my arms, and gently put my lips on her large eyes, which she closed with evident distaste under my kisses on her fresh cheeks and full lips which she turned away.

"You don't seem to like being kissed," I said to her.

"*Mica*" was her only answer.

I sat down on the trunk by her side, and, passing my arm through hers, I said: "*Mica! mica! mica!* in reply to everything. I shall call you Mademoiselle *Mica,* I think."

For the first time I fancied I saw the shadow of a smile on her lips, but it passed by so quickly that I may have been mistaken.

"But if you never say anything but '*Mica*' I shall not know what to do to try and please you. Let us see; what shall we do to-day?"

She hesitated a moment as if some fancy had flitted through her head, and then she said carelessly: "It is all the same to me; whatever you like."

"Very well, Mademoiselle *Mica,* we will have a carriage and go for a drive."

"As you please," she said.

Paul was waiting for us in the dining-room, looking as bored as third parties generally do in love affairs. I assumed a delighted air, and shook hands with him with triumphant energy.

"What are you thinking of doing?" he asked.

"First of all we will go and see a little of the town, and then we might take a carriage, for a drive in the neighborhood."

We breakfasted nearly in silence and then started.

I dragged Francesca from palace to palace, and she either looked at nothing or merely just glanced carelessly at all the various masterpieces. Paul followed us, growling all sorts of disagreeable things. Then we all three took a silent drive into the country and returned to dinner.

The next day it was the same thing and the next day again; so on the third Paul said to me: "Look here, I am going to leave you; I am not going to stop here for three weeks watching you make love to this creature."

I was perplexed and annoyed, for to my great surprise I had become singularly attached to Francesca. A man is but weak and foolish, carried away by the merest trifle, and a coward every time that his senses are excited or mastered. I clung to this unknown girl, silent and dissatisfied as she always was. I liked her somewhat ill-tempered face, the dissatisfied droop of her mouth, the weariness of her look; I liked her fatigued movements, the contemptuous way in which she yielded to my wishes, the very indifference of her caresses. A secret bond, that mysterious bond of animal love, the secret attachment to a possession which does not satiate, bound me to her. I told Paul so, quite frankly. He treated me as if I had been a fool, and then said:

"Very well, take her with you."

But she obstinately refused to leave Genoa, without giving any reason. I besought, I reasoned, I promised, but all was of no avail, and so I stayed on.

Paul declared that he would go by himself, and went so far as to pack up his portmanteau; but he remained all the same.

Thus a fortnight passed. Francesca was always silent and irritable, lived beside me rather than with me, responded to all my desires, all my demands, and all my propositions with her perpetual *'Che mi fa,'* or with her no less perpetual *'Mica.'*

My friend got more and more furious, but my only answer was, "You can go if you are tired of staying. I am not detaining you."

Then he called me names, overwhelmed me with reproaches, and exclaimed: "Where do you think I can go to now? We had three weeks at our disposal, and here is a fortnight gone! I cannot continue my journey now; and, in any case, I am not going to Venice, Florence, and Rome all by myself. But you will pay for it, and more dearly than you think for, most likely. You are not going to bring a man all the way from Paris in order to shut him up at a hotel in Genoa with an Italian adventuress."

When I told him, very calmly, to return to Paris, he exclaimed that he was going to do so the very next day; but the next day he was still there, still in a rage and swearing.

By this time we began to be known in the streets, through which we wandered from morning till night. Sometimes French people would turn round astonished at meeting their fellow-countrymen in the company of this girl with her striking costume, and who looked singularly out of place, not to say compromising, beside us.

She used to walk along, leaning on my arm, without looking at anything. Why did she remain with me, with us, who seemed to give her so little pleasure? Who was she? Where did she come

from? What was she doing? Had she any plan or idea? How did she live? As an adventuress, or by chance meetings? I tried in vain to find out and to explain it. The better I knew her the more enigmatical she became. She was not one of those who make a living by and a profession of venal love. She rather seemed to me to be a girl of poor family who had been seduced and taken away, and then cast aside and lost. What did she think was going to become of her, or for whom was she waiting? She certainly did not appear to be trying to make a conquest of me, or to get any profit out of me.

I tried to question her, to speak to her of her childhood and family; but she never gave me an answer. I stayed with her, my heart unfettered and my senses enchained, never wearied of holding this proud and quarrelsome woman in my arms, captivated by my senses, or rather seduced, overcome, by the youthful, healthy, powerful charm which emanated from her sweet-smelling person and from the robust lines of her body.

Another week passed, and the term of my holiday was drawing to a close, for I had to be back in Paris by July 11. By this time Paul had come to take his part in the adventure, though still grumbling at me, while I invented pleasures, distractions, and excursions to amuse my mistress and my friend; and in order to do this I gave myself a large amount of trouble.

One day I proposed an excursion to Santa Margarita, a charming little town in the midst of gardens, hidden at the foot of a slope which stretches far into the sea. We all three were following the excellent road which goes along the foot of the mountain. Suddenly

Francesca said to me: "I shall not be able to go with you to-morrow; I must go and see some of my relatives."

That was all; I did not ask her any questions, as I was quite sure she would not answer me.

The next morning she got up very early; then as I remained in bed, she sat down at the foot of it, and said in a constrained and hesitating voice:

"If I do not come back to-night shall you come and fetch me?"

"Most certainly I shall," was my reply. "Where must I come to?"

Then she explained: "You must go into the Victor-Emmanuel street, down the Passage Falene, and go into the furniture shop at the bottom, in a court, and there you must ask for Mme. Rondoli. That is where it is."

And so she went away, leaving me rather astonished.

When Paul saw that I was alone he stammered out: "Where is Francesca?" And when I told him what had happened he exclaimed:

"My dear fellow, let us make use of our chance, and bolt; as it is, our time is up. Two days, more or less, make no difference. Let us start at once; go and pack up your things. Off we go!"

But I refused. I could not, as I told him, leave the girl in such a manner, after having lived with her for nearly three weeks. At any rate I ought to say good-bye to her, and make her accept a present; I certainly had no intention of behaving badly to her.

But he would not listen; he pressed and worried me, but I would not give way.

I remained indoors for several hours, expecting Francesca's return, but she did not come. At last, at dinner, Paul said with a triumphant air: "She has thrown you over, my dear fellow; it is certainly very strange."

I must acknowledge that I was surprised and rather vexed. He laughed in my face, and made fun of me.

"It is not exactly a bad way of getting rid of you, though rather primitive. 'Just wait for me, I shall be back in a moment,' they often say. How long are you going to wait? I should not wonder if you were foolish enough to go and look for her at the address she gave you. 'Does Mme. Rondoli live here, please?' I'll bet that you are longing to go there."

"Not in the least," I protested, "and I assure you that if she does not come back to-morrow morning I shall start by the express at eight o'clock. I shall have waited twenty-four hours, and that is enough; my conscience will be quite clear."

I spent an uneasy and unpleasant evening, for I really had at heart a very tender feeling for her. I went to bed at twelve o'clock, and hardly slept at all. I got up at six, called Paul, packed up my things, and two hours later we started for France together.

III.

The next year, at just about the same period, I was seized, just as one is with a periodical fever, with a new desire to go to Italy, and I immediately

made up my mind to carry it into effect. There is no doubt that every really well-educated man ought to see Florence, Venice, and Rome. There is the additional advantage of providing many subjects of conversation in society, and of giving one an opportunity for bringing forward artistic generalities which appear profound. This time I went alone, and I arrived at Genoa at the same time as the year before, but without any adventure on the road. I went to the same hotel, and actually happened to have the same room.

I was scarcely in bed when the recollection of Francesca which, since the evening before, had been floating vaguely through my mind, haunted me with strange persistency. I thought of her nearly the whole night, and by degrees the wish to see her again seized me, a confused desire at first, which gradually grew stronger and more intense. At last I made up my mind to spend the next day in Genoa, to try and find her, and if I should not succeed to take the evening train.

Early in the morning I set out on my search. I remembered the directions she had given me when she left me, perfectly — Victor-Emmanuel street, etc., etc., house of the furniture-dealer, at the bottom of the yard in a court.

I found it without the least difficulty, and I knocked at the door of a somewhat dilapidated-looking dwelling. A fat woman opened it, who must once have been very handsome, but who actually was only very dirty. Although she was too fat, she still bore the lines of majestic beauty; her untidy hair fell over her forehead and shoulders, and one fancied one could

see her fat body floating about in an enormous dressing-gown covered with spots of dirt and grease. Round her neck she wore a great gilt necklace, and on her wrists were splendid bracelets of Genoa filigree work.

In rather a hostile manner she asked me what I wanted, and I replied by requesting her to tell me whether Francesca Rondoli lived there.

"What do you want with her?" she asked.

"I had the pleasure of meeting her last year, and I should like to see her again."

The old woman looked at me suspiciously.

"Where did you meet her?" she asked.

"Why, here, in Genoa itself."

"What is your name?"

I hesitated a moment, and then I told her. I had scarcely done so when the Italian put out her arms as if to embrace me. "Oh! you are the Frenchman; how glad I am to see you! But what grief you caused the poor child. She waited for you a month; yes, a whole month. At first she thought you would come to fetch her. She wanted to see whether you loved her. If you only knew how she cried when she saw that you were not coming! She cried till she seemed to have no tears left. Then she went to the hotel, but you had gone. She thought that most likely you were traveling in Italy, and that you would return by Genoa to fetch her, as she would not go with you. And she waited more than a month, Monsieur; and she was so unhappy; so unhappy. I am her mother."

I really felt a little disconcerted, but I regained my self-possession, and asked:

"Where is she now?"

"She has gone to Paris with a painter, a delightful man, who loves her very much, and who gives her everything that she wants. Just look at what she sent me; they are very pretty, are they not?"

And she showed me, with quite southern animation, her heavy bracelets and necklace. "I have also," she continued, "earrings with stones in them, a silk dress, and some rings; but I only wear them on grand occasions. Oh! she is very happy, sir, very happy. She will be so pleased when I tell her you have been here. But pray come in and sit down. You will take something or other, surely?"

But I refused, as I now wished to get away by the first train; but she took me by the arm and pulled me in, saying:

"Please, come in; I must tell her that you have been in here."

I found myself in a small, rather dark room, furnished with only a table and a few chairs.

She continued: "Oh! She is very happy now, very happy. When you met her in the train she was very miserable, for her lover had just left her at Marseilles, and she was coming back, poor child. But she liked you at once, though she was still rather sad, you understand. Now she has all she wants, and she writes and tells me everything that she does. His name is Bellemin, and they say he is a great painter in your country. He met her in the street here, and fell in love with her out of hand. But you will take a glass of syrup?—it is very good. Are you quite alone, this year?"

"Yes," I said, "quite alone."

I felt an increasing inclination to laugh, as my first disappointment was dispelled by what Mother Rondoli said. I was obliged, however, to drink a glass of her syrup.

"So you are quite alone?" she continued. "How sorry I am that Francesca is not here now; she would have been company for you all the time you stayed. It is not very amusing to go about all by oneself, and she will be very sorry also."

Then, as I was getting up to go, she exclaimed:

"But would you not like Carlotta to go with you? She knows all the walks very well. She is my second daughter, sir."

No doubt she took my look of surprise for consent, for she opened the inner door and called out up the dark stairs which I could not see:

"Carlotta! Carlotta! make haste down, my dear child."

I tried to protest, but she would not listen.

"No; she will be very glad to go with you; she is very nice, and much more cheerful than her sister, and she is a good girl, a very good girl, whom I love very much."

In a few moments a tall, slender, dark girl appeared, with her hair hanging down, and whose youthful figure showed unmistakably beneath an old dress of her mother.

The latter at once told her how matters stood.

"This is Francesca's Frenchman, you know, the one whom she knew last year. He is quite alone, and has come to look for her, poor fellow; so I told him that you would go with him to keep him company."

The girl looked at me with her handsome dark eyes, and said, smiling:

"I have no objection, if he wishes it."

I could not possibly refuse, and merely said:

"Of course I shall be very glad of your company."

Her mother pushed her out. "Go and get dressed directly; put on your blue dress and your hat with the flowers, and make haste."

As soon as she had left the room the old woman explained herself: "I have two others, but they are much younger. It costs a lot of money to bring up four children. Luckily the eldest is off my hands at present."

Then she told all about herself, about her husband, who had been an employee on the railway, but who was dead, and she expatiated on the good qualities of Carlotta, her second girl, who soon returned, dressed, as her sister had been, in a striking, peculiar manner.

Her mother examined her from head to foot, and, after finding everything right, she said:

"Now, my children, you can go." Then, turning to the girl, she said: "Be sure you are back by ten o'clock to-night; you know the door is locked then." The answer was:

"All right mamma; don't alarm yourself."

She took my arm, and we went wandering about the streets, just as I had done the previous year with her sister.

We returned to the hotel for lunch, and then I took my new friend to Santa Margarita, just as I had done with her sister the year previously.

During the whole fortnight which I had at my disposal I took Carlotta to all the places of interest in

and about Genoa. She gave me no cause to regret the other.

She cried when I left her, and the morning of my departure I gave her four bracelets for her mother, besides a substantial token of my affection for herself.

One of these days I intend to return to Italy, and I cannot help remembering, with a certain amount of uneasiness, mingled with hope, that Mme. Rondoli has two more daughters.

A BAD ERROR

I MADE Mrs. Jadelle's acquaintance in Paris, this winter. She pleased me infinitely at once. You know her as well as I — no — pardon me — nearly as well as I. You know that she is poetic and fantastic at one and the same time. You know she is free in her manner and of impressionable heart, impulsive, courageous, venturesome, audacious — above all, prejudiced, and yet, in spite of that, sentimental, delicate, easily hurt, tender, and modest.

She was a widow, and I adore widows, from sheer laziness. I was on the lookout for a wife, and I paid her my court. I knew her, and more than that, she pleased me. The moment came when I believed it would do to risk my proposal. I was in love with her and in danger of becoming too much so. When one marries, he should not love his wife too much, or he is likely to make himself foolish; his vision is distorted, and he becomes silly and brutal at the same time. A man must assert himself. If he loses

his head at first, he risks being a nobody a year later.

So one day I presented myself at her house with light gloves on, and I said to her: "Madame, I have the honor of loving you, and I have come to ask you if there is any hope of my pleasing you enough to warrant your placing your happiness in my care and taking my name."

She answered quietly: "What a question, sir! I am absolutely ignorant of whether you will please me sooner or later, or whether you will not; but I ask nothing better than to make a trial of it. As a man, I do not find you bad. It remains to be seen how you are at heart and in character and habits. For the most part marriages are tempestuous or criminal because people are not careful enough in yoking themselves together. Sometimes a mere nothing is sufficient, a mania or tenacious opinion upon some moral or religious point, no matter what, a gesture which displeases, or some little fault or disagreeable quality, to turn an affianced couple, however tender and affectionate, into a pair of irreconcilable enemies, incensed with, but chained to, each other until death. I will not marry, sir, without knowing the depths and corners and recesses of the soul of the man with whom I am to share my existence. I wish to study him at leisure, at least for some months.

"Here is what I propose. You will come and pass the summer in my house at De Lauville, my country place, and we shall see then if we are fitted to live side by side—I see you laugh! You have a bad thought. Oh! sir, if I were not sure of myself, I would never make this proposition. I have for love,

what you call love, you men, such a scorn, such a disgust that a fall is impossible for me. Well, do you accept?"

I kissed her hand.

"When shall we start, Madame?"

"The tenth of May."

"It is agreed."

A month later I was installed at her house. She was truly a singular woman. From morning until evening she was studying me. As she was fond of horses, we passed each day in riding through the woods, talking about everything, but she was always trying to probe my innermost thoughts, to which end she observed my slightest movement.

As for me, I became foolishly in love, and did not trouble myself about the fitness of our characters. But I soon perceived that even my sleep was put under inspection. Some one slept in a little room adjoining mine, entering very late and with infinite precaution. This espionage for every instant finally made me impatient. I wished to hasten the conclusion, and one evening thought of a way of bringing it about. She had received me in such a way that I had abstained from any new essay, but a violent desire invaded me to make her pay, in some fashion, for this restricted *régime* to which I had submitted, and I thought I knew a way.

You know Cesarine, her chambermaid, a pretty girl from Granville, where all the women are pretty, and as blond as her mistress was brunette? Well, one afternoon I drew the little soubrette into my room and, putting a hundred francs in her hand, I said to her;

"My dear child, I do not wish you to do anything villainous, but I desire the same privilege toward your mistress that she takes toward me."

The little maid laughed, with a sly look, as I continued:

"I am watched day and night, I know. I am watched as I eat, drink, dress myself, shave, and put on my socks, and I know it."

The little girl stammered: "Yes, sir—" then she was silent. I continued:

"You sleep in the room next to mine to see if I snore, or if I dream aloud, you cannot deny it!"

"Yes, sir—" Then she was silent again.

I became excited: "Oh! well, my girl," said I, "you understand that it is not fair for everything to be known about me while I know nothing of the person who is to be my wife. I love her with all my soul. She has the face, the heart, and mind that I have dreamed of, and I am the happiest of men on this account; nevertheless, there are some things I would like to know better—"

Cesarine decided to put my bank-note in her pocket. I understood that the bargain was concluded.

"Listen, my girl," said I. "We men—we care much for certain—certain details—physical details, which do not hinder a woman from being charming, but which can change her price in our eyes. I do not ask you to say anything bad of your mistress, nor even to disclose to me her defects, if she has any. Only answer me frankly four or five questions, which I am going to put to you. You know Mrs. Jadelle as well as you do yourself, since you dress and undress

her every day. Now then, tell me this: Is she as plump as she has the appearance of being?"

The little maid did not answer.

I continued: "You cannot, my child, be ignorant of the fact that women put cotton, padding, you know, where — where — where they nourish their infants, and also where they sit. Tell me, does she use padding?"

Cesarine lowered her eyes. Finally she said timidly: "Ask whatever you want to, sir, I will answer all at one time."

"Well, my girl, there are some women whose knees meet, so much so that they touch with each step that they take; and there are others who have them far apart, which makes their limbs like the arches of a bridge, so that one might view the landscape between them. This is the prettier of the two fashions. Tell me, how are your mistress's limbs?"

Still the maid said nothing.

I continued: "There are some who have necks so beautiful that they form a great fold underneath. And there are some that have large arms with a thin figure. There are some that are very large before and nothing at all behind, and there are some large behind and nothing at all in front. All this is very pretty, very pretty, but I wish to know just how your mistress is made. Tell me frankly, and I will give you much more money —"

Cesarine looked at me out of the corner of her eye and, laughing with all her heart, answered: "Sir, aside from being dark, mistress is made exactly like me."

Then she fled.

FROM AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY P. SCHMAUS.

"Sir, aside from being dark, Mistress is made exactly like me."

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I had been made sport of. This was the time I found myself ridiculous, and I resolved to avenge myself, at least, upon this impertinent maid.

An hour later I entered the little room with precaution where she listened to my sleeping, and unscrewed the bolts.

Toward midnight she arrived at her post of observation. I followed her immediately. On perceiving me, she was going to cry out, but I put my hand over her mouth, and, without too great effort, I convinced myself that, if she had not lied, Mrs. Jadelle was very well made.

I even put much zest into this authentication which, though pushed a little far, did not seem to displease Cesarine. She was, in very fact, a ravishing specimen of the Norman peasant race, strong and fine at the same time. She was wanting perhaps in certain delicate attentions that Henry IV. would have scorned, but I revealed them to her quickly, and as I adore perfumes, I gave her a box the next evening, with a flask of lavender-water.

We were soon more closely bound to each other than I could have believed, almost friends. She became an exquisite mistress, naturally *spirituelle* and broken to pleasure. She had been a courtesan of great merit in Paris.

The delights which she brought me enabled me to await Mrs. Jadelle's conclusion of proof without impatience. I became an incomparable character, supple, docile, and complacent. My *fiancée* found me delightful beyond a doubt, and I judged, from certain signs, that I was soon to be accepted. I was certainly the happiest man in the world, awaiting tranquilly the legal

kiss of the woman I loved, in the arms of a young and beautiful girl for whom I had much fondness.

It is here, Madame, that I must ask your forbearance a little; I have arrived at a delicate point.

One evening, as we were returning from a horseback ride, Mrs. Jadelle complained sharply that her grooms had not taken certain measures prescribed by her for the horse she rode. She repeated many times: "Let them take care, let them take care, I have a way of surprising them."

I passed a calm night in my bed. I awoke early, full of ardor and energy. Then I dressed myself.

I was in the habit of going up on the tower of the house each morning to smoke a cigarette. This was reached by a limestone staircase, lighted by a large window at the top of the first story.

I advanced without noise, my feet encased in morocco slippers with wadded soles, and was climbing the first steps when I perceived Cesarine bending out the window, looking down below.

Not that I saw Cesarine entirely, but only a part of Cesarine, and that the lower part. I loved this part just as much; of Mrs. Jadelle, I would have preferred, perhaps, the upper. She was thus so charming, so round, this part which offered itself to me, and only slightly clothed in a white skirt.

I approached so softly that the girl heard nothing. I put myself on my knees; with infinite precaution I took hold of the two sides of the skirt and, quickly, I raised it. I recognized there the full, fresh, plump, sweet, ischial tuberosities of my mistress, and threw there,—your pardon, Madame,—I threw there a tender kiss, a kiss of a lover who dares anything.

I was surprised. It was verbena! But I had no time for reflection. I received a sudden blow, or rather a push in the face which seemed to break my nose. I uttered a cry that made my hair rise. The person had turned around—it was Mrs. Jadelle!

She was fighting the air with her hands, like a woman who had lost consciousness. She gasped for some seconds, made a gesture of using a horsewhip, and then fled.

Ten minutes later, Cesarine, stupefied, brought me in a letter. I read:

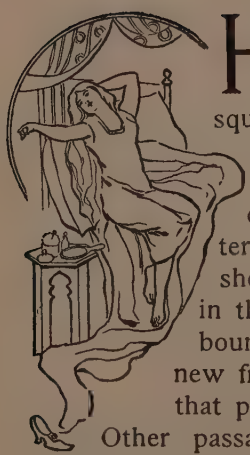
"Mrs. Jadelle hopes that M. de Brives will immediately rid her of his presence."

I departed. Well, I am not yet consoled. I have attempted every means and all explanations to obtain a pardon for my misunderstanding, but all proceedings have been nipped in the bud.

Since that moment, you see, I have in my—in my heart a scent of verbena which gives me an immoderate desire to smell the perfume again.

THE PORT

I.



HAVING sailed from Havre on the third of May, 1882, for a voyage in the China seas, the square-rigged three-master, "Notre Dame des Vents," made her way back into the port of Marseilles on the eighth of August, 1886, after an absence of four years. When she had discharged her first cargo in the Chinese port for which she was bound, she had immediately found a new freight for Buenos Ayres, and from that place had conveyed goods to Brazil. Other passages, then damage repairs, calms ranging over several months, gales which knocked her out of her course — all the accidents, adventures, and misadventures of the sea, in short — had kept far from her country this Norman three-master, which had come back to Marseilles with her hold full of tin boxes containing American preserves.

At her departure she had on board, besides the captain and the mate, fourteen sailors, eight Normans,

and six Britons. On her return there were left only five Britons and four Normans, the other Briton had died while on the way; the four Normans, having disappeared under various circumstances, had been replaced by two Americans, a negro, and a Norwegian carried off, one evening, from a tavern in Singapore.

The big vessel, with reefed sails and yards crossed over her masts, drawn by a tug from Marseilles, rocking over a sweep of rolling waves which subsided gently into calm water, passed in front of the Château d'If, and then under all the gray rocks of the roadstead, which the setting sun covered with a golden vapor. She entered the ancient port, in which are packed together, side by side, ships from every part of the world, pellmell, large and small, of every shape and every variety of rigging, soaking like a *bouillabaisse* of boats in this basin too limited in extent, full of putrid water where shells touch each other, rub against each other, and seem to be pickled in the juice of the vessels.

"Notre Dame des Vents" took up her station between an Italian brig and an English schooner, which made way to let this comrade slip in between them; then, when all the formalities of the customhouse and of the port had been complied with, the captain authorized two-thirds of his crew to spend the night on shore.

It was already dark. Marseilles was lighted up. In the heat of this summer's evening a flavor of cooking with garlic floated over the noisy city, filled with the clamor of voices, of rolling vehicles, of the crackling of whips, and of southern mirth.

As soon as they felt themselves on shore, the ten men, whom the sea had been tossing about for some months past, proceeded along quite slowly with the hesitating steps of persons who are out of their element, unaccustomed to cities, two by two, in procession.

They swayed from one side to another as they walked, looked about them, smelling out the lanes opening out on the harbor, rendered feverish by the amorous appetite which had been growing to maturity in their bodies during their last sixty-six days at sea. The Normans strode on in front, led by Célestin Duclos, a tall young fellow, sturdy and waggish, who served as a captain for the others every time they set forth on land. He divined the places worth visiting, found out byways after a fashion of his own, and did not take much part in the squabbles so frequent among sailors in seaport towns. But, once he was caught in one, he was afraid of nobody.

After some hesitation as to which of the obscure streets that lead down to the waterside, and from which arise heavy smells, a sort of exhalation from closets, they ought to enter, Célestin gave the preference to a kind of winding passage, where gleamed over the doors projecting lanterns bearing enormous numbers on their rough colored glass. Under the narrow arches at the entrance to the houses, women wearing aprons, like servants, seated on straw chairs, rose up on seeing them coming near, taking three steps toward the gutter which separated the street into halves, and so cutting off the path from this file of men, who sauntered along at their leisure,

humming and sneering, already getting excited by the vicinity of those dens of prostitutes.

Sometimes, at the end of a hall, behind a second open door, which presented itself unexpectedly, covered over with dark leather, would appear a big wench, undressed, whose heavy thighs and fat calves abruptly outlined themselves under her coarse white cotton wrapper. Her short petticoat had the appearance of a puffed-out girdle; and the soft flesh of her breast, her shoulders, and her arms made a rosy stain on a black velvet corsage with edgings of gold lace. She kept calling out from her distant corner, "Will you come here, my pretty boys?" and sometimes she would go out herself to catch hold of one of them, and to drag him toward her door with all her strength, fastening on him like a spider drawing forward an insect bigger than itself. The man, excited by the struggle, would offer a mild resistance, and the rest would stop to look on, undecided between the longing to go in at once and that of lengthening this appetizing promenade. Then when the woman, after desperate efforts, had brought the sailor to the threshold of her abode, in which the entire band would be swallowed up after him, Célestin Duclos, who was a judge of houses of this sort, suddenly exclaimed: "Don't go in there, Marchand! That's not the place."

The man, thereupon, obeying this direction, freed himself with a brutal shake; and the comrades formed themselves into a band once more, pursued by the filthy insults of the exasperated wench, while other women, all along the alley in front of them, came out past their doors, attracted by the noise, and in

hoarse voices threw out to them invitations coupled with promises. They went on, then, more and more stimulated by the combined effects of the coaxings and the seductions held out as baits to them by the choir of portresses of love all over the upper part of the street, and the ignoble maledictions hurled at them by the choir at the lower end — the despised choir of disappointed wenches. From time to time, they met another band — soldiers marching along with spurs jingling at their heels — sailors again — isolated citizens — clerks in business houses. On all sides might be seen fresh streets, narrow, and studded all over with those equivocal lanterns. They pursued their way still through this labyrinth of squalid habitation, over those greasy pavements through which putrid water was oozing, between those walls filled with women's flesh.

At last, Duclos made up his mind, and, drawing up before a house of rather attractive exterior, made all his companions follow him in there.

II.

Then followed a scene of thoroughgoing revelry. For four hours the six sailors gorged themselves with love and wine. Six months' pay was thus wasted.

In the principal room in the tavern they were installed as masters, gazing with malignant glances at the ordinary customers, who were seated at the little tables in the corners, where one of the girls, who was left free to come and go, dressed like a big baby or a singer at a *café* concert, went about serving them, and then seated herself near them. Each

man, on coming in, had selected his partner, whom he kept all the evening, for the vulgar taste is not changeable. They had drawn three tables close up to them; and, after the first bumper, the procession divided into two parts, increased by as many women as there were seamen, had formed itself anew on the staircase. On the wooden steps the four feet of each couple kept tramping from time to time, while the several files of lovers were swallowed up behind the narrow doors leading into the different rooms.

Then they came down again to have a drink, and after they had returned to the rooms, descended the stairs once more.

Now, almost intoxicated, they began to howl. Each of them, with bloodshot eyes, and his chosen female companion on his knee, sang or bawled, struck the table with his fist, shouted while swilling wine down his throat, setting free the brute within. In the midst of them, Célestin Duclos pressing close to him a big damsel with red cheeks, who sat astride over his legs, gazed at her ardently. Less tipsy than the others, not that he had taken less drink, he was as yet occupied with other thoughts, and, more tender than his comrades, he tried to get up a chat. His thoughts wandered a little, escaped him, and then came back, and disappeared again, without allowing him to recollect exactly what he meant to say.

"What time — what time — how long are you here?"

"Six months," the girl answered.

He seemed to be satisfied with her, as if this were a proof of good conduct, and he went on questioning her:

"Do you like this life?"

She hesitated, then in a tone of resignation:

"One gets used to it. It is not more worrying than any other kind of life. To be a servant-girl or else a scrub is always a nasty occupation."

He looked as if he also approved of this truthful remark.

"You are not from this place?" said he.

She answered merely by shaking her head.

"Do you come from a distance?"

She nodded, still without opening her lips.

"Where is it you come from?"

She appeared to be thinking, to be searching her memory, then said falteringly:

"From Perpignan."

He was once more perfectly satisfied, and said:

"Ah! yes."

In her turn she asked:

"And you, are you a sailor?"

"Yes, my beauty."

"Do you come from a distance?"

"Ah! yes. I have seen countries, ports, and everything."

"You have been round the world, perhaps?"

"I believe you, twice rather than once."

Again she seemed to hesitate, to search in her brain for something that she had forgotten, then, in a tone somewhat different, more serious:

"Have you met many ships in your voyages?"

"I believe you, my beauty."

"You did not happen to see the 'Notre Dame des Vents'?"

He chuckled:

"No later than last week."

She turned pale, all the blood leaving her cheeks, and asked:

"Is that true, perfectly true?"

"'Tis true as I tell you."

"Honor bright! you are not telling me a lie?"

He raised his hand.

"Before God, I'm not!" said he.

"Then do you know whether Célestin Duclos is still on her?"

He was astonished, uneasy, and wished, before answering, to learn something further.

"Do you know him?"

She became distrustful in turn.

"Oh! 'tis not myself—'tis a woman who is acquainted with him."

"A woman from this place?"

"No, from a place not far off."

"In the street? What sort of a woman?"

"Why, then, a woman—a woman like myself."

"What has she to say to him, this woman?"

"I believe she is a countrywoman of his."

They stared into one another's eyes, watching one another, feeling, divining that something of a grave nature was going to arise between them.

He resumed:

"I could see her there, this woman."

"What would you say to her?"

"I would say to her—I would say to her—that I had seen Célestin Duclos."

"He is quite well—isn't he?"

"As well as you or me—he is a strapping young fellow."

She became silent again, trying to collect her ideas; then slowly:

"Where has the 'Notre Dame des Vents' gone to?"

"Why, just to Marseilles."

She could not repress a start.

"Is that really true?"

"'Tis really true."

"Do you know Duclos?"

"Yes, I do know him."

She still hesitated; then in a very gentle tone:

"Good! That's good!"

"What do you want with him?"

"Listen!—you will tell him—nothing!"

He stared at her, more and more perplexed. At last he put this question to her:

"Do you know him, too, yourself?"

"No," said she.

"Then what do you want with him?"

Suddenly, she made up her mind what to do, left her seat, rushed over to the bar where the landlady of the tavern presided, seized a lemon, which she tore open and shed its juice into a glass, then she filled this glass with pure water, and carrying it across to him:

"Drink this!"

"Why?"

"To make it pass for wine. I will talk to you afterward."

He drank it without further protest, wiped his lips with the back of his hand, then observed:

"That's all right. I am listening to you."

"You will promise not to tell him you have seen

me, or from whom you learned what I am going to tell you. You must swear not to do so."

He raised his hand.

"All right. I swear I will not."

"Before God?"

"Before God."

"Well, you will tell him that his father died, that his mother died, that his brother died, the whole three in one month, of typhoid fever, in January, 1883—three years and a half ago."

In his turn he felt all his blood set in motion through his entire body, and for a few seconds he was so much overpowered that he could make no reply; then he began to doubt what she had told him, and asked:

"Are you sure?"

"I am sure."

"Who told it to you?"

She laid her hands on his shoulders, and looking at him out of the depths of her eyes:

"You swear not to blab?"

"I swear that I will not."

"I am his sister!"

He uttered that name in spite of himself:

"Françoise?"

She contemplated him once more with a fixed stare, then, excited by a wild feeling of terror, a sense of profound horror, she faltered in a very low tone, almost speaking into his mouth:

"Oh! oh! it is you, Célestin."

They no longer stirred, their eyes riveted in one another.

Around them, his comrades were still yelling.

The sounds made by glasses, by fists, by heels keeping time to the choruses, and the shrill cries of the women, mingled with the roar of their songs.

He felt her leaning on him, clasping him, ashamed and frightened, his sister. Then, in a whisper, lest anyone might hear him, so hushed that she could scarcely catch his words:

"What a misfortune! I have made a nice piece of work of it!"

The next moment her eyes were filled with tears, and she faltered:

"Is that my fault?"

But, all of a sudden, he said:

"So then, they are dead?"

"They are dead."

"The father, the mother, and the brother?"

"The three in one month, as I told you. I was left by myself with nothing but my clothes, for I was in debt to the apothecary and the doctor and for the funeral of the three, and had to pay what I owed with the furniture.

"After that I went as a servant to the house of Maître Cacheux,—you know him well,—the cripple. I was just fifteen at the time, for you went away when I was not quite fourteen. I tripped with him. One is so senseless when one is young. Then I went as a nursery-maid to the notary, who debauched me also, and brought me to Havre, where he took a room for me. After a little while he gave up coming to see me. For three days I lived without eating a morsel of food; and then, not being able to get employment, I went to a house, like many others. I, too, have seen different places—ah! and dirty places! Rouen,

Evreux, Lille, Bordeaux, Perpignan, Nice, and then Marseilles, where I am now!"

The tears started from her eyes, flowed over her nose, wet her cheeks, and trickled into her mouth.

She went on:

"I thought you were dead, too?—my poor Célestin."

He said:

"I would not have recognized you myself—you were such a little thing then, and here you are so big!—but how is it that you did not recognize me?"

She answered with a despairing movement of her hands:

"I see so many men that they all seem to me alike."

He kept his eyes still fixed on her intently, oppressed by an emotion that dazed him and filled him with such pain as to make him long to cry like a little child that has been whipped. He still held her in his arms, while she sat astride on his knees, with his open hands against the girl's back; and now by sheer dint of looking continually at her, he at length recognized her, the little sister left behind in the country with all those whom she had seen die, while he had been tossing on the seas. Then, suddenly taking between his big seaman's paws this head found once more, he began to kiss her, as one kisses kindred flesh. And after that, sobs, a man's deep sobs, heaving like great billows, rose up in his throat, resembling the hiccoughs of drunkenness.

He stammered:

"And this is you—this is you, Françoise—my little Françoise!"

Then, all at once, he sprang up, began swearing in an awful voice, and struck the table such a blow with his fist that the glasses were knocked down and smashed. After that, he advanced three steps, staggered, stretched out his arms, and fell on his face. And he rolled on the floor, crying out, beating the boards with his hands and feet, and uttering such groans that they seemed like a death rattle.

All those comrades of his stared at him, and laughed.

"He's not a bit drunk," said one.

"He ought to be put to bed," said another.

"If he goes out, we'll all be run in together."

Then, as he had money in his pockets, the landlady offered to let him have a bed, and his comrades, themselves so much intoxicated that they could not stand upright, hoisted him up the narrow stairs to the apartment of the woman who had just been in his company, and who remained sitting on a chair, at the foot of that bed of crime, weeping quite as freely as he had wept, until the morning dawned.

CHÂLI

ADMIRAL DE LA VALLÉE, who seemed to be half asleep in his armchair, said in a voice which sounded like an old woman's:

"I had a very singular little love adventure once; would you like to hear it?"

He spoke from the depths of his great armchair, with that everlasting dry, wrinkled smile on his lips, that smile *à la Voltaire,* which made people take him for a terrible sceptic.

I.

"I was thirty years of age and a first lieutenant in the navy, when I was intrusted with an astronomical expedition to Central India. The English Government provided me with all the necessary means for carrying out my enterprise, and I was soon busied with a few followers in that vast, strange, surprising country.

"It would take me ten volumes to relate that journey. I went through wonderfully magnificent regions, was received by strangely handsome princes, and was entertained with incredible magnificence. For two months it seemed to me as if I were walking in a poem, that I was going about in a fairy kingdom, on the back of imaginary elephants. In the midst of wild forests I discovered extraordinary ruins, delicate and chiseled like jewels, fine as lace and enormous as mountains, those fabulous, divine monuments which are so graceful that one falls in love with their form as with a woman, feeling a physical and sensual pleasure in looking at them. As Victor Hugo says, 'Whilst wide-awake, I was walking in a dream.'

"Toward the end of my journey I reached Ganhard, which was formerly one of the most prosperous towns in Central India, but is now much decayed. It is governed by a wealthy, arbitrary, violent, generous, and cruel prince. His name is Rajah Maddan, a true Oriental potentate, delicate and barbarous, affable and sanguinary, combining feminine grace with pitiless ferocity.

"The city lies at the bottom of a valley, on the banks of a little lake surrounded by pagodas, which bathe their walls in the water. At a distance the city looks like a white spot, which grows larger as one approaches it, and by degrees you discover the domes and spires, the slender and graceful summits of Indian monuments.

"At about an hour's distance from the gates, I met a superbly caparisoned elephant, surrounded by a guard of honor which the sovereign had sent

me, and I was conducted to the palace with great ceremony.

"I should have liked to have taken the time to put on my gala uniform, but royal impatience would not admit of it. He was anxious to make my acquaintance, to know what he might expect from me.

"I was ushered into a great hall surrounded by galleries, in the midst of bronze-colored soldiers in splendid uniforms, while all about were standing men dressed in striking robes, studded with precious stones.

"I saw a shining mass, a kind of setting sun reposing on a bench like our garden benches, without a back; it was the rajah who was waiting for me, motionless, in a robe of the purest canary color. He had some ten or fifteen million francs' worth of diamonds on him, and by itself, on his forehead, glistened the famous star of Delhi, which has always belonged to the illustrious dynasty of the Pariharas of Mundore, from whom my host was descended.

"He was a man of about five-and-twenty, who seemed to have some negro blood in his veins, although he belonged to the purest Hindoo race. He had large, almost motionless, rather vague eyes, fat lips, a curly beard, low forehead, and dazzling sharp white teeth, which he frequently showed with a mechanical smile. He got up and gave me his hand in the English fashion, and then made me sit down beside him on a bench which was so high that my feet hardly touched the ground, and on which I was very uncomfortable.

"He immediately proposed a tiger hunt for the next day; war and hunting were his chief occupations, and he could hardly understand how one could care for anything else. He was evidently fully persuaded that I had only come all that distance to amuse him a little, and to be the companion of his pleasures.

"As I stood greatly in need of his assistance, I tried to flatter his tastes, and he was so pleased with me that he immediately wished to show me how his trained boxers fought, and led the way into a kind of arena situated within the palace.

"At his command two naked men appeared, their hands covered with steel claws. They immediately began to attack each other, trying to strike one another with these sharp weapons, which left long cuts, from which the blood flowed freely down their dark skins.

"It lasted for a long time, till their bodies were a mass of wounds, and the combatants were tearing each other's flesh with these pointed blades. One of them had his jaw smashed, while the ear of the other was split into three pieces.

"The prince looked on with ferocious pleasure, uttered grunts of delight, and imitated all their movements with careless gestures, crying out constantly:

"'Strike, strike hard!'

"One fell down unconscious and had to be carried out of the arena, covered with blood, while the rajah uttered a sigh of regret because it was over so soon.

"He turned to me to know my opinion; I was

disgusted, but I congratulated him loudly. He then gave orders that I was to be conducted to Kuch-Mahal (the palace of pleasure), where I was to be lodged.

"This *bijou* palace was situated at the extremity of the royal park, and one of its walls was built into the sacred lake of Vihara. It was square, with three rows of galleries with colonnades of most beautiful workmanship. At each angle there were light, lofty, or low towers, standing either singly or in pairs: no two were alike, and they looked like flowers growing out of that graceful plant of Oriental architecture. All were surmounted by fantastic roofs, like coquettish ladies' caps.

"In the middle of the edifice a large dome raised its round cupola, like a woman's bosom, beside a beautiful clock-tower.

"The whole building was covered with sculpture from top to bottom, with exquisite arabesques which delighted the eye, motionless processions of delicate figures whose attitudes and gestures in stone told the story of Indian manners and customs.

"The rooms were lighted by windows with dentelated arches, looking on to the gardens. On the marble floor were designs of graceful bouquets in onyx, lapis-lazuli, and agate.

"I had scarcely had time to finish my toilette when Haribada, a court dignitary who was specially charged to communicate between the prince and me, announced his sovereign's visit.

"The saffron-colored rajah appeared, again shook hands with me, and began to tell me a thousand different things, constantly asking me for my opinion,

which I had great difficulty in giving him. Then he wished to show me the ruins of the former palace at the other extremity of the gardens.

"It was a real forest of stones inhabited by a large tribe of apes. On our approach the males began to run along the walls, making the most hideous faces at us, while the females ran away, carrying off their young in their arms. The rajah shouted with laughter and pinched my arm to draw my attention, and to testify his own delight, and sat down in the midst of the ruins, while around us, squatting on the top of the walls, perching on every eminence, a number of animals with white whiskers put out their tongues and shook their fists at us.

"When he had seen enough of this, the yellow rajah rose and began to walk sedately on, keeping me always at his side, happy at having shown me such things on the very day of my arrival, and reminding me that a grand tiger-hunt was to take place the next day, in my honor.

"I was present at it, at a second, a third, at ten, twenty in succession. We hunted all the animals which the country produces in turn: the panther, the bear, elephant, antelope, and the crocodile—half the beasts in creation I should say. I was disgusted at seeing so much blood flow, and tired of this monotonous pleasure.

"At length the prince's ardor abated and, at my urgent request, he left me a little leisure for work, contenting himself by loading me with costly presents. He sent me jewels, magnificent stuffs, and well-broken animals of all sorts, which Haribada presented to me with apparently as grave respect as if I had been the

sun himself, although he heartily despised me at the bottom of his heart.

"Every day a procession of servants brought me, in covered dishes, a portion of each course that was served at the royal table. Every day he seemed to take an extreme pleasure in getting up some new entertainment for me—dances by the bayaderes, jugglers, reviews of the troops, and I was obliged to pretend to be most delighted with it, so as not to hurt his feelings when he wished to show me his wonderful country in all its charm and all its splendor.

"As soon as I was left alone for a few moments I either worked or went to see the monkeys, whose company pleased me a great deal better than that of their royal master.

"One evening, however, on coming back from a walk, I found Haribada outside the gate of my palace. He told me in mysterious tones that a gift from the king was waiting for me in my abode, and he said that his master begged me to excuse him for not having sooner thought of offering me that of which I had been deprived for such a long time.

"After these obscure remarks the ambassador bowed and withdrew.

"When I went in I saw six little girls standing against the wall, motionless, side-by-side, like smelts on a skewer. The eldest was perhaps ten and the youngest eight years old. For the first moment I could not understand why this girls' school had taken up its abode in my rooms; then, however, I divined the prince's delicate attention: he had made me a present of a harem, and had chosen it very young

from an excess of generosity. There, the more unripe the fruit is, in the higher estimation it is held.

"For some time I remained confused, embarrassed, and ashamed in the presence of these children, who looked at me with great grave eyes which seemed already to divine what I might want of them.

"I did not know what to say to them; I felt inclined to send them back; but I could not return the presents of a prince; it would have been a mortal insult. I was obliged, therefore, to install this troop of children in my palace.

"They stood motionless, looking at me, waiting for my orders, trying to read my thoughts in my eyes. Confound such a present! How absurdly it was in my way. At last, thinking that I must be looking rather ridiculous, I asked the eldest her name.

"'Châli,' she replied.

"This little creature, with her beautiful skin, which was slightly yellow, like old ivory, was a marvel, a perfect statue, with her face and its long and severe lines.

"I then asked, in order to see what she would reply, and also, perhaps, to embarrass her:

"'What have you come here for?'

"She replied in her soft, harmonious voice: 'I have come to be altogether at my lord's disposal, and to do whatever he wishes.' She was evidently quite resigned.

"I put the same question to the youngest, who answered immediately in her shrill voice:

"'I am here to do whatever you ask me, my master.'

"This one was like a little mouse, and was very

taking, just as they all were, so I took her in my arms and kissed her. The others made a movement to go away, thinking, no doubt, that I had made my choice; but I ordered them to stay, and sitting down in the Indian fashion, I made them all sit round me and began to tell them fairy-tales, for I spoke their language tolerably well.

"They listened very attentively, and trembled, wringing their hands in agony. Poor little things, they were not thinking any longer of the reason why they were sent to me.

"When I had finished my story, I called Latchmân, my confidential servant, and made him bring sweetmeats and cakes, of which they ate enough to make themselves ill. Then, as I began to find the adventure rather funny, I organized games to amuse my wives.

"One of these diversions had an enormous success. I made a bridge of my legs and the six children ran underneath, the smallest beginning and the tallest always knocking against them a little, because she did not stoop enough. It made them shout with laughter, and these young voices sounding through the low vaults of my sumptuous palace seemed to wake it up and to people it with childlike gaiety and life.

"Next I took great interest in seeing to the sleeping apartments of my innocent concubines, and in the end I saw them safely locked up under the surveillance of four female servants, whom the prince had sent me at the same time in order to take care of my sultanas.

"For a week I took the greatest pleasure in acting the part of a father toward these living dolls.

We had capital games of hide-and-seek and puss-in-the-corner, which gave them the greatest pleasure. Every day I taught them a new game, to their intense delight.

"My house now seemed to be one large nursery, and my little friends, dressed in beautiful silk stuffs, and in materials embroidered with gold and silver, ran up and down the long galleries and the quiet rooms like little human animals.

"Châli was an adorable little creature, timid and gentle, who soon got to love me ardently, with some degree of shame, with hesitation as if afraid of European morality, with reserve and scruples, and yet with passionate tenderness. I cherished her as if I had been her father.

"The others continued to play in the palace like a lot of happy kittens, but Châli never left me except when I went to the prince.

"We passed delicious hours together in the ruins of the old castle, among the monkeys, who had become our friends.

"She used to lie on my knees, and remain there, turning all sorts of things over in her little sphinx's head, or perhaps not thinking of anything, retaining that beautiful, charming, hereditary pose of that noble and dreamy people, the hieratic pose of the sacred statues.

"In a large brass dish I had one day brought provisions, cakes, fruits. The apes came nearer and nearer, followed by their young ones, who were more timid; at last they sat down round us in a circle, without daring to come any nearer, waiting for me to distribute my delicacies. Then, almost invariably,

a male more daring than the rest would come to me with outstretched hand, like a beggar, and I would give him something, which he would take to his wife. All the others immediately began to utter furious cries, cries of rage and jealousy; and I could not make the terrible racket cease except by throwing each one his share.

"As I was very comfortable in the ruins I had my instruments brought there, so that I might be able to work. As soon, however, as they saw the copper fittings on my scientific instruments, the monkeys, no doubt taking them for some deadly engines, fled on all sides, uttering the most piercing cries.

"I often spent my evenings with Châli on one of the external galleries that looked on to the lake of Vihara. One night in silence we looked at the bright moon gliding over the sky, throwing a mantle of trembling silver over the water, and, on the further shore, upon the row of small pagodas like carved mushrooms with their stalks in the water. Taking the thoughtful head of my little mistress between my hands, I printed a long, soft kiss on her polished brow, on her great eyes, which were full of the secret of that ancient and fabulous land, and on her calm lips which opened to my caress. I felt a confused, powerful, above all a poetical, sensation, the sensation that I possessed a whole race in this little girl, that mysterious race from which all the others seem to have taken their origin.

"The prince, however, continued to load me with presents. One day he sent me a very unexpected object, which excited a passionate admiration in Châli.

It was merely one of those cardboard boxes covered with shells stuck on outside, which can be bought at any European seaside resort for a penny or two. But there it was a jewel beyond price, and no doubt was the first that had found its way into the kingdom. I put it on a table and left it there, wondering at the value which was set upon this trumpery article out of a bazaar.

"But Châli never got tired of looking at it, of admiring it ecstatically. From time to time she would say to me, 'May I touch it?' And when I had given her permission she raised the lid, closed it again with the greatest precaution, touched the shells very gently, and the contact seemed to give her real physical pleasure.

"However, I had finished my scientific work, and it was time for me to return. I was a long time in making up my mind, kept back by my tenderness for my little friend, but at last I was obliged to fix the day of my departure.

"The prince got up fresh hunting excursions and fresh wrestling matches, and after a fortnight of these pleasures I declared that I could stay no longer, and he gave me my liberty.

"My farewell from Châli was heartrending. She wept, lying beside me, with her head on my breast, shaken with sobs. I did not know how to console her; my kisses were no good.

"All at once an idea struck me, and getting up I went and got the shell-box, and putting it into her hands, I said, 'That is for you; it is yours.'

"Then I saw her smile at first. Her whole face was lighted up with internal joy, with that profound

joy which comes when impossible dreams are suddenly realized, and she embraced me ardently.

"All the same, she wept bitterly when I bade her a last farewell.

"I gave paternal kisses and cakes to all the rest of my wives, and then I left for home.

II.

"Two years had passed when my duties again called me to Bombay, and, because I knew the country and the language well, I was left there to undertake another mission.

"I finished what I had to do as quickly as possible, and as I had a considerable amount of spare time on my hands I determined to go and see my friend Rajah Maddan and my dear little Châli once more, though I expected to find her much changed.

"The rajah received me with every demonstration of pleasure, and hardly left me for a moment during the first day of my visit. At night, however, when I was alone, I sent for Haribada, and after several misleading questions I said to him:

"'Do you know what has become of little Châli, whom the rajah gave me?'

"He immediately assumed a sad and troubled look, and said, in evident embarrassment:

"'We had better not speak of her.'

"'Why? She was a dear little woman.'

"'She turned out badly, sir.'

"'What—Châli? What has become of her? Where is she?'

"'I mean to say that she came to a bad end.'

"'A bad end! Is she dead?'

"'Yes. She committed a very dreadful action.'

"I was very much distressed. I felt my heart beat; my breast was oppressed with grief, and I insisted on knowing what she had done and what had happened to her.

"The man became more and more embarrassed, and murmured: 'You had better not ask about it.'

"'But I want to know.'

"'She stole—'

"'Who—Châli? What did she steal?'

"'Something that belonged to you.'

"'To me? What do you mean?'

"'The day you left she stole that little box which the prince had given you; it was found in her hands.'

"'What box are you talking about?'

"'The box covered with shells.'

"'But I gave it to her.'

"The Hindoo looked at me with stupefaction, and then replied: 'Well, she declared with the most sacred oaths that you had given it to her, but nobody could believe that you could have given a king's present to a slave, and so the rajah had her punished.'

"'How was she punished? What was done to her?'

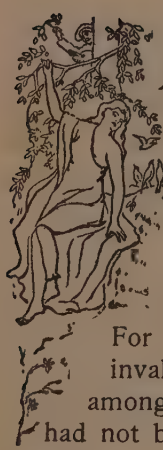
"'She was tied up in a sack and thrown into the lake from this window, from the window of the room in which we are, where she had committed the theft.'

"I felt the most terrible grief that I ever experienced, and made a sign to Haribada to go away so

that he might not see my tears. I spent the night on the gallery which looked on to the lake, on the gallery where I had so often held the poor child on my knees, and pictured to myself her pretty little body lying decomposed in a sack in the dark waters beneath me.

"The next day I left again, in spite of the rajah's entreaties and evident vexation; and I now still feel as if I had never loved any woman but Châli."

JEROBOAM



ANYONE who said, or even insinuated, that the Reverend William Greenfield, vicar of St. Sampson's, Tottenham, did not make his wife Anna perfectly happy, would certainly have been very malicious. In their twelve years of married life he had honored her with twelve children, and could anybody ask more of a saintly man?

Saintly even to heroism, in truth! For his wife Anna, who was endowed with invaluable virtues, which made her a model among wives and a paragon among mothers, had not been equally endowed physically. In one word, she was hideous. Her hair, which though thin was coarse, was the color of the national half-and-half, but of thick half-and-half which looked as if it had been already swallowed several times. Her complexion, which was muddy and pimply, looked as if it were covered with sand mixed with brick-dust. Her teeth, which were long and protruding, seemed to start out of their sockets in order to

escape from that almost lipless mouth whose sulphurous breath had turned them yellow. Evidently Anna suffered from bile.

Her china-blue eyes looked different ways, one very much to the right and the other very much to the left, with a frightened squint; no doubt in order that they might not see her nose, of which they felt ashamed. They were quite right! Thin, soft, long, pendent, sallow, and ending in a violet knob, it irresistibly reminded those who saw it of something both ludicrous and indescribable. Her body, through the inconceivable irony of nature, was at the same time thin and flabby, wooden and chubby, without either the elegance of slimness or the rounded curves of stoutness. It might have been taken for a body which had formerly been fat, but which had now grown thin, while the covering had remained stretched on the framework.

She was evidently nothing but skin and bone, but had too much bone and too little skin.

It will be seen that the reverend gentleman had done his duty, his whole duty, in fact more than his duty, in sacrificing a dozen times on this altar. Yes, a dozen times bravely and loyally! His wife could not deny it, or dispute the number, because the children were there to prove it. A dozen times, and not one less!

And, alas! not once more. This was the reason why, in spite of appearances, Mrs. Anna Greenfield ventured to think, in the depths of her heart, that the Reverend William Greenfield, vicar of St. Sampson's, Tottenham, had not made her perfectly happy. She thought so all the more as, for four years

now, she had been obliged to renounce all hope of that annual sacrifice, which had been so easy and so regular formerly, but which had now fallen into disuse. In fact, at the birth of her twelfth child, the reverend gentleman had expressly said to her:

"God has greatly blessed our union, my dear Anna. We have reached the sacred number of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Were we now to persevere in the works of the flesh it would be mere debauchery, and I cannot suppose that you would wish me to end my exemplary life in lustful practices."

His wife blushed and looked down, and the holy man, with that legitimate pride of virtue which is its own reward, audibly thanked Heaven that he was "not as other men are."

A model among wives and a paragon of mothers, Anna lived with him for four years on those terms, without complaining to anyone. She contented herself by praying fervently to God that He would inspire her husband with the desire to begin a second series of the Twelve Tribes. At times even, in order to make her prayers more efficacious, she tried to compass that end by culinary means. She spared no pains, and gorged the reverend gentleman with highly seasoned dishes — hare soup, ox-tails stewed in sherry, the green fat in turtle soup, stewed mushrooms, Jerusalem artichokes, celery, and horse-radish; hot sauces, truffles, hashes with wine and cayenne pepper in them, curried lobsters, pies made of cocks' combs, oysters, and the soft roe of fish. These dishes were washed down by strong beer and generous wines, Scotch ale, Burgundy, dry champagne, brandy, whisky, and gin — in a word, by that numberless array

of alcoholic drinks with which the English people love to heat their blood.

As a matter of fact, the reverend gentleman's blood became very heated, as was shown by his nose and cheeks. But in spite of this, the powers above were inexorable, and he remained quite indifferent as regards his wife, who was unhappy and thoughtful at the sight of that protruding nasal appendage, which, alas! was alone in its glory.

She became thinner, and, at the same time, flabbier than ever. She almost began to lose her trust in God, when, suddenly, she had an inspiration: was it not, perhaps, the work of the devil?

She did not care to inquire too closely into the matter, as she thought it a very good idea. It was this:

"Go to the Universal Exhibition in Paris, and there, perhaps, you will discover how to make yourself loved."

Decidedly luck favored her, for her husband immediately gave her permission to go. As soon as she got into the Esplanade des Invalides she saw the Algerian dancers and said to herself:

"Surely this would inspire William with the desire to be the father of the thirteenth tribe!"

But how could she manage to get him to be present at such abominable orgies? For she could not hide from herself that it was an abominable exhibition, and she knew how scandalized he would be at their voluptuous movements. She had no doubt that the devil had led her there, but she could not take her eyes off the scene, and it gave her an idea. So for nearly a fortnight you might have seen the poor, unattractive woman sitting and attentively and curi-

ously watching the swaying hips of the Algerian women. She was learning.

The evening of her return to London she rushed into her husband's bedroom, disrobed herself in an instant, retaining only a thin gauze covering, and for the first time in her life appeared before him in all the ugliness of semi-nudity.

"Come, come," the saintly man stammered out, "are you—are you mad, Anna! What demon possesses you? Why inflict the disgrace of such a spectacle on me?"

But she did not listen to him, did not reply, and suddenly began to sway her hips about like an *almah*.* The reverend gentleman could not believe his eyes; in his stupefaction, he did not think of covering them with his hands or even of shutting them. He looked at her stupefied and dumfounded, a prey to the hypnotism of ugliness. He watched her as she advanced and retired, as she swayed and skipped and wriggled and postured in extraordinary attitudes. For a long time he sat motionless and almost unable to speak. He only said in a low voice:

"Oh, Lord! To think that twelve times—twelve times—a whole dozen!"

Then she fell into a chair, panting and worn out, and saying to herself:

"Thank Heaven! William looks as he used to do formerly on the days that he honored me. Thank Heaven! There will be a thirteenth tribe, and then a fresh series of tribes, for William is very methodical in all that he does!"

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*Egyptian dancing girl.—(TRANSLATOR.)

But William merely took a blanket off the bed and threw it over her, saying in a voice of thunder:

"Your name is no longer Anna, Mrs. Greenfield; for the future you shall be called Jezebel. I only regret that I have twelve times mingled my blood with your impure blood." And then, seized by pity, he added: "If you were only in a state of inebriety, of intoxication, I could excuse you."

"Oh, William!" she exclaimed, repentantly, "I am in that state. Forgive me, William—forgive a poor drunken woman!"

"I will forgive you, Anna," he replied, and he pointed to a wash-hand basin, saying: "Cold water will do you good, and when your head is clear, remember the lesson which you must learn from this occurrence."

"What lesson?" she asked, humbly.

"That people ought never to depart from their usual habits."

"But why, then, William," she asked, timidly, "have you changed your habits?"

"Hold your tongue!" he cried, "hold your tongue, Jezebel! Have you not got over your intoxication yet? For twelve years I certainly followed the divine precept: 'increase and multiply,' once a year. But since then, I have grown accustomed to something else, and I do not wish to alter my habits."

And the Reverend William Greenfield, vicar of St. Sampson's, Tottenham, the saintly man whose blood was inflamed by heating food and liquor, whose ears were like full-blown poppies, and who had a nose like a tomato, left his wife and, as had been his habit for four years, went to make love to Polly, the servant.

"Now, Polly," he said, "you are a clever girl, and I mean, through you, to teach Mrs. Greenfield a lesson she will never forget. I will try and see what I can do for you."

And to accomplish this, he took her to Mrs. Greenfield, called the latter his little Jezebel, and said to her, with an unctuous smile:

"Call me Jeroboam! You don't understand why? Neither do I, but that does not matter. Take off all your things, Polly, and show yourself to Mrs. Greenfield."

The servant did as she was bidden, and the result was that Mrs. Greenfield never again hinted to her husband the desirability of laying the foundations of a thirteenth tribe.

VIRTUE IN THE BALLET

It is a strange feeling of pleasure that the writer about the stage and about theatrical characters in general feels when he occasionally discovers a good, honest human heart in the twilight behind the scenes. Of all the witches and semi-witches of that eternal Walpurgis Night, whose boards represent the world, the ladies of the ballet have at all times and in all places been regarded as least like saints, although Hackländer repeatedly tried in vain, in his earlier novels, to convince us that true virtue appears in tights and short petticoats, and is only to be found in ballet girls. I fear that the popular voice is right as a general rule, but it is equally true that here and there one finds a pearl in the dust, and even in the dirt. The short story that I am about to tell will best justify my assertion.

Whenever a new, youthful dancer appeared at the Vienna Opera House, the *habitués* began to go after her, and did not rest until the fresh young rose had

been plucked by some hand or other, though often it was old and trembling. For how could those young and pretty, sometimes even beautiful, girls—with every right to life, love, and pleasure, but poor and on a very small salary—resist the seduction of the smell of flowers and of the flash of diamonds? And if one resisted it, it was love, some real, strong passion, that gave her the strength; generally, however, only to go after luxury all the more shamelessly and selfishly, when her lover forsook her.

At the beginning of the winter season of 185– the pleasing news was spread among the *habitués*, that a girl of dazzling beauty was going to appear very shortly in the ballet at the Court Theater. When the evening came, nobody had yet seen the much discussed phenomenon, but report spread her name from mouth to mouth: it was Satanella. The moment the troop of elastic figures in fluttering petticoats jumped on to the stage, every opera-glass in the boxes and stalls was directed on the stage, and at the same instant the new dancer was discovered, although she timidly kept in the background.

She was one of those girls who seem crowned with the bright halo of virginity, but at the same time present a splendid type of womanhood. She had the voluptuous form of Rubens's second wife, whom they called, not untruly, a reincarnated Helen, and her head with its delicate nose, its small, full mouth, and its dark, enquiring eyes reminded people of the celebrated picture of the Flemish Venus in the Belvedere in Vienna.

She took the old guard of the Vienna Court Theater by storm, and the very next morning a perfect

shower of *billets-doux*, jewels, and bouquets fell into the poor ballet-girl's attic. For a moment she was dazzled by all this splendor, and looked at the gold bracelets, the brooches set with rubies and emeralds, and at the sparkling earrings, with flushed cheeks. Then an unspeakable terror of being lost and of sinking into degradation seized her, and she pushed the jewels away and was about to send them back. But as is usual in such cases, her mother intervened in favor of the generous gentlemen, and so the jewels were accepted, but the notes which accompanied them were not answered. A second and a third discharge of Cupid's artillery followed without making any impression on that virtuous girl; in consequence a great number of her admirers grew quiet, though some continued to send her presents and to assail her with love letters. One had the courage to go still further.

He was a wealthy banker who had called on the mother of Henrietta, as we will call the fair-haired ballet-girl, and then one evening, quite unexpectedly, on the girl herself. He by no means met with the reception which he had expected from the pretty girl in the faded, cotton gown. Henrietta treated him with a certain amount of good-humored respect, which had a much more unpleasant effect on him than that coldness and prudery which is often coexistent with coquetry and selfish speculation among a certain class of women. In spite of everything, however, he soon went to see her daily, and lavished his wealth on the beautiful dancer, without request on her part and gave her no chance of refusing, for he relied on the mother for everything. The mother took pretty,

small apartments for her daughter and herself in the Kärntnerstrasse and furnished them elegantly, hired a cook and housemaid, made an arrangement with a fly-driver, and lastly clothed her daughter's lovely limbs in silk, velvet, and valuable lace.

Henrietta persistently held her tongue at all this; only once she said to her mother, in the presence of the Stock Exchange Jupiter:

"Have you won a prize in the lottery?"

"Of course, I have," her mother replied with a laugh.

The girl, however, had given away her heart long before, and, contrary to all precedent, to a man of whose very name she was ignorant, who sent her no diamonds, and not even flowers. But he was young and good-looking, and stood, so retiringly and so evidently in love, at the small side door of the Opera House every night, when she got out of her antediluvian and rickety fly, and also when she got into it again after the performance, that she could not help noticing him. Soon, he began to follow her wherever she went, and once he summoned up courage to speak to her, when she had been to see a friend in a remote suburb. He was very nervous, but she thought all that he said very clear and logical, and she did not hesitate for a moment to confess that she returned his love.

"You have made me the happiest, and at the same time, the most wretched of men," he said after a pause.

"What do you mean?" she said innocently.

"Do you not belong to another man?" he asked her in a sad voice.

She shook her abundant, light curls.

"Up till now I have belonged to myself alone, and I will prove it to you, by requesting you to call upon me frequently and without restraint. Everyone shall know that we are lovers. I am not ashamed of belonging to an honorable man, but I will not sell myself."

"But your splendid apartments, and your dresses," her lover interposed shyly; "you cannot pay for them out of your salary."

"My mother has won a large prize in the lottery, or made a hit on the Stock Exchange." And with these words, the determined girl cut short all further explanations.

That same evening the young man paid his first visit, to the horror of the girl's mother, who was so devoted to the Stock Exchange, and he came again the next day, and nearly every day. Her mother's reproaches were of no more avail than Jupiter's furious looks, and when the latter one day asked for an explanation as to certain visits, the girl said proudly:

"That is very soon explained. He loves me as I love him, and I presume you can guess the rest."

And he certainly did guess the rest and disappeared, and with him the shower of gold ceased.

The mother cried and the daughter laughed. "I never gave the worn-out old rake any hopes, and what does it matter to me what bargain you made with him? I always thought that you had been lucky on the Stock Exchange. Now, however, we must seriously consider about giving up our apartments, and make up our minds to live as we did before."

"Are you really capable of making such a sacrifice for me, to renounce luxury and to have my poverty?" her lover said.

"Certainly I am! Is not that a matter of course when one loves?" the ballet-girl replied in surprise.

"Then let me inform you, my dear Henriette," he said, "that I am not so poor as you think; I only wished to find out whether I could make myself loved for my own sake, and I have done so. I am Count L——, and though I am a minor and dependent on my parents, yet I have enough to be able to retain your pretty rooms for you, and to offer you, if not a luxurious, at any rate a comfortable existence."

On hearing this the mother dried her tears immediately. Count L—— became the girl's acknowledged lover, and they passed the happiest hours together. Unselfish as the girl was, she was yet such a thoroughly ingenuous Viennese, that, whenever she saw anything that took her fancy, whether it was a dress, a cloak, or one of those pretty little ornaments for a side table, she used to express her admiration in such terms as forced her lover to make her a present of the object in question. In this way Count L—— incurred enormous debts, which his father paid repeatedly; at last, however, he inquired into the cause of all this extravagance, and when he discovered it he gave his son the choice of giving up his connection with the dancer, or of relinquishing all claims on the paternal money box.

It was a sorrowful evening, when Count L—— told his mistress of his father's determination.

"If I do not give you up I shall be able to do

nothing for you," he said at last, "and I shall not even know how I should manage to live myself, for my father is just the man to allow me to want, if I defy him. That, however, is a very secondary consideration; but as a man of honor, I cannot bind you, who have every right to luxury and enjoyment, to myself, from the moment when I cannot even keep you from want, and so I must set you at liberty."

"But I will not give you up," Henrietta said proudly.

The young Count shook his head sadly.

"Do you love me?" the ballet-girl said quickly.

"More than my life."

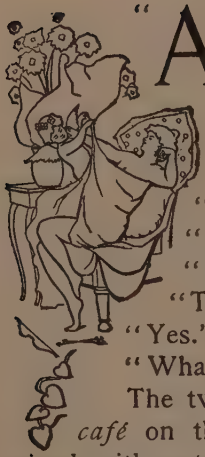
"Then we will not separate, as long as I have anything," she continued.

And she would not give up her connection with him, and when his father actually turned Count L—— into the street, she took her lover into her own lodgings. He obtained a situation as a copying clerk in a lawyer's office, and she sold her valuable dresses and jewels. Thus they lived for more than a year.

The young man's father did not appear to trouble his head about them, but nevertheless he knew everything that went on in their small home, and knew every article that the ballet-girl sold. At last, softened by such love and strength of character, he himself made the first advances to a reconciliation with his son.

At the present time Henrietta wears the diamonds which formerly belonged to the old Countess, and it is long since she was a ballet-girl. Now she sits by the side of her husband in a carriage on whose panels their armorial bearings are painted.

THE DOUBLE PINS



"Ah! my dear fellow, what jades women are!"

"What makes you say that?"

"Because they have played me an abominable trick."

"You?"

"Yes, me."

"Women, or a woman?"

"Two women."

"Two women at once?"

"Yes."

"What was the trick?"

The two young men were sitting outside a *café* on the Boulevards, and drinking liqueurs mixed with water, those aperients which look like infusions of all the tints in a box of water-colors. They were nearly the same age: twenty-five to thirty. One was dark and the other fair, and they had the same semi-elegant look of stockjobbers, of men who go to the Stock Exchange, and into drawing-rooms, who are to be seen everywhere, who live everywhere, and love everywhere. The dark one continued.

"I have told you of my connection with that little woman, a tradesman's wife, whom I met on the beach at Dieppe?"

"Yes."

"My dear fellow, you know how it is. I had a mistress in Paris whom I love dearly, an old friend, a good friend, who is virtually a habit, in fact—one I value very much."

"Your habit?"

"Yes, my habit, and hers also. She is married to an excellent man, whom I also value very much, a very cordial fellow and a capital companion! I may say that my life is bound up with that house."

"Well?"

"Well! they could not manage to leave Paris, and I found myself a widower at Dieppe."

"Why did you go to Dieppe?"

"For change of air. One cannot remain on the Boulevards the whole time."

"And then?"

"Then I met the little woman I mentioned to you on the beach there."

"The wife of that head of a public office?"

"Yes, she was dreadfully dull; her husband only came every Sunday, and he is horrible! I understood her perfectly, and we laughed and danced together."

"And the rest?"

"Yes, but that came later. However, we met, and we liked each other. I told her I liked her, and she made me repeat it, so that she might understand it better, and she put no obstacles in my way."

"Did you love her?"

"Yes, a little; she is very nice."

"And what about the other?"

"The other was in Paris! Well, for six weeks it was very pleasant, and we returned here on the best of terms. Do you know how to break with a woman, when that woman has not wronged you in any way?"

"Yes, perfectly well."

"How do you manage it?"

"I give her up."

"How do you do it?"

"I do not see her any longer."

"But supposing she comes to you?"

"I am not at home."

"And if she comes again?"

"I say I am not well."

"If she looks after you?"

"I play her some dirty trick."

"And if she puts up with it?"

"I write her husband anonymous letters, so that he may look after her on the days that I expect her."

"That is serious! I cannot resist, and do not know how to bring about a rupture, and so I have a collection of mistresses. There are some whom I do not see more than once a year, others every ten months, others on those days when they want to dine at a restaurant, those whom I have put at regular intervals do not worry me, but I often have great difficulty with the fresh ones, so as to keep them at proper intervals."

"And then?"

"And then — then, this little woman was all fire and flame, without any fault of mine, as I told you! As her husband spends all the whole day at the of-

fice, she began to come to me unexpectedly, and twice she nearly met my regular one on the stairs."

"The devil!"

"Yes; so I gave each of them her days, regular days, to avoid confusion, Saturday and Monday for the old one, Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday for the new one."

"Why did you show her the preference?"

"Ah! My dear friend, she is younger."

"So that only gave you two days to yourself in a week."

"That is enough for one."

"Allow me to compliment you on that."

"Well, just fancy that the most ridiculous and most annoying thing in the world happened to me. For four months everything had been going on perfectly; I felt quite safe, and I was really very happy, when suddenly, last Monday, the crash came.

"I was expecting my regular one at the usual time, a quarter past one, and was smoking a good cigar, dreaming, very well satisfied with myself, when I suddenly saw that it was past the time. I was much surprised, for she is very punctual, but I thought that something might have accidentally delayed her. However, half an hour passed, then an hour, an hour and a half, and then I knew that something must have detained her—a sick headache, perhaps, or some annoying visitor. That sort of waiting is very vexatious, very annoying, and enervating. At last I made up my mind to go out, and not knowing what to do, I went to her and found her reading a novel.

"'Well,' I said to her. And she replied quite calmly.

"'My dear, I could not come, I was hindered.'

"'How?'

"'By something else.'

"'What was it?'

"'A very annoying visit.'

"I saw she would not tell me the true reason, and as she was very calm, I did not trouble myself any more about it, hoping to make up for lost time with the other the next day. On the Tuesday I was very excited and amorous in expectation of the public official's little wife, and I was surprised that she did not come before the appointed time. I looked at the clock every moment, and watched the hands impatiently, but the quarter passed, then the half hour, then two o'clock. I could not sit still any longer, and walked up and down very soon in great strides, putting my face against the window, and my ears to the door, to listen whether she was not coming upstairs.

"Half past two, three o'clock! I seized my hat, rushed to her house. She was reading a novel, my dear fellow! 'Well!' I said, anxiously, and she replied as calmly as usual:

"'I was hindered, and could not come.'

"'By what?'

"'An annoying visit.'

"Of course I immediately thought that they both knew everything, but she seemed so calm and quiet that I set aside my suspicions, and thought it was only some strange coincidence, as I could not believe in such dissimulation on her part. And so, after half-an-hour's friendly talk, which was, however, interrupted a dozen times by her little girl coming in

and out of the room, I went away, very much annoyed. Just imagine the next day."

"The same thing happened?"

"Yes, and the next also. And that went on for three weeks without any explanation, without anything explaining such strange conduct to me, the secret of which I suspected, however."

"They knew everything?"

"I should think so, by George. But how? Ah! I had a great deal of anxiety before I found it out."

"How did you manage it at last?"

"From their letters, for on the same day they both gave me their dismissal in identical terms."

"Well?"

"This is how it was: You know that women always have an array of pins about them. I know hairpins, I doubt them, and look after them, but the others are much more treacherous, those confounded little black-headed pins which look all alike to us, great fools that we are, but which they can distinguish, just as we can distinguish a horse from a dog.

"Well, it appears that one day my official's little wife left one of those telltale instruments pinned to the paper, close to my looking-glass. My usual one had immediately seen this little black speck, no bigger than a flea, had taken it out without saying a word and had left one of her pins, which was also black, but of a different pattern, in the same place.

"The next day, the official's wife wished to recover her property, and immediately recognized the substitution. Then her suspicions were aroused, and she put in two and crossed them. My original one replied to this telegraphic signal by three black pellets,

one on the top of the other, and as soon as this method had begun, they continued to communicate with one another, without saying a word, just to spy on each other. Then it appears that the regular one, being bolder, wrapped a tiny piece of paper round the little wire point, and wrote upon it:

"'C. D., Poste Restante, Boulevard Malherbes.'

"Then they wrote to each other. You understand that was not everything that passed between them. They set to work with precaution, with a thousand stratagems, with all the prudence that is necessary in such cases, but the regular one made a bold stroke, and made an appointment with the other. I do not know what they said to each other, all that I know is that I had to pay the costs of their interview. There you have it all!"

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"And you do not see them any more?"

"I beg your pardon, I see them as friends, for we have not quarreled altogether."

"And have they met again?"

"Yes, my dear fellow, they have become intimate friends."

"And has not that given you an idea?"

"No, what idea?"

"You great booby! The idea of making them put back the pins where they found them."

HOW HE GOT THE LEGION OF HONOR

SOME people are born with a predominant instinct, with some vocation or some desire which demands recognition as soon as they begin to speak or to think.

Ever since he was a child Monsieur Caillard had only had one idea in his head — to be decorated. When he was still quite a small boy he used to wear a zinc Cross of the Legion of Honor in his tunic, just like other children wear a soldier's cap, and he took his mother's hand in the street with a proud look, sticking out his little chest with its red ribbon and metal star so that it might show to advantage.

His studies were not a success, and he failed in his examination for Bachelor of Arts; so, not knowing what to do, he married a pretty girl, for he had plenty of money of his own.

They lived in Paris, like many rich middle-class people do, mixing with their own particular set,

without going among other people, proud of knowing a Deputy, who might perhaps be a Minister some day, while two Chiefs of Division were among their friends.

But Monsieur Caillard could not get rid of his one absorbing idea, and he felt constantly unhappy because he had not the right to wear a little bit of colored ribbon in his buttonhole.

When he met any men who were decorated on the Boulevards, he looked at them askance, with intense jealousy. Sometimes, when he had nothing to do in the afternoon, he would count them, and say to himself: "Just let me see how many I shall meet between the Madeleine and the Rue Drouot."

Then he would walk slowly, looking at every coat, with a practiced eye, for the little bit of red ribbon, and when he had got to the end of his walk he always said the numbers out loud. "Eight officers and seventeen knights. As many as that! It is stupid to sow the Cross broadcast in that fashion. I wonder how many I shall meet going back?"

And he returned slowly, unhappy when the crowd of passers-by interfered with his seeing them.

He knew the places where most of them were to be found. They swarmed in the Palais Royal. Fewer were seen in the Avenue de l'Opera than in the Rue de la Paix, while the right side of the Boulevard was more frequented by them than the left.

They also seemed to prefer certain *cafés* and theaters. Whenever he saw a group of white-haired old gentlemen standing together in the middle of the pavement, interfering with the traffic, he used to say to himself: "They are officers of the Legion of

Honor," and he felt inclined to take off his hat to them.

He had often remarked that the officers had a different bearing from mere knights. They carried their heads higher, and you felt that they enjoyed greater official consideration, and a more widely-extended importance.

Sometimes again the worthy man would be seized with a furious hatred for everyone who was decorated; he felt like a Socialist toward them. Then, when he got home, excited at meeting so many Crosses,—just like a poor hungry wretch is on passing some dainty provision-shop,—he used to ask in a loud voice:

"When shall we get rid of this wretched government?" And his wife would be surprised, and ask:

"What is the matter with you to-day?"

"I am indignant," he would reply, "at the injustice I see going on around us. Oh! the Communards were certainly right!"

After dinner he would go out again and look at the shops where all the decorations were sold, and examine all the emblems of various shapes and colors. He would have liked to possess them all, and to have walked gravely at the head of a procession with his crush-hat under his arm and his breast covered with decorations, radiant as a star, amid a buzz of admiring whispers and a hum of respect. But, alas! he had no right to wear any decoration whatever.

He used to say to himself: "It is really too difficult for any man to obtain the Legion of Honor unless he is some public functionary. Suppose I try to get appointed an officer of the Academy!"

But he did not know how to set about it, and spoke to his wife on the subject, who was stupefied.

"Officer of the Academy! What have you done to deserve it?"

He got angry. "I know what I am talking about; I only want to know how to set about it. You are quite stupid at times."

She smiled. "You are quite right; I don't understand anything about it."

An idea struck him: "Suppose you were to speak to M. Rosselin, the Deputy, he might be able to advise me. You understand I cannot broach the subject to him directly. It is rather difficult and delicate, but coming from you it might seem quite natural."

Mme. Caillard did what he asked her, and M. Rosselin promised to speak to the Minister about it. Then Caillard began to worry him, till the Deputy told him he must make a formal application and put forward his claims.

"What were his claims?" he said. "He was not even a Bachelor of Arts."

However, he set to work and produced a pamphlet, with the title, "The People's Right to Instruction," but he could not finish it for want of ideas.

He sought for easier subjects, and began several in succession. The first was, "The Instruction of Children by Means of the Eye." He wanted gratuitous theaters to be established in every poor quarter of Paris for little children. Their parents were to take them there when they were quite young, and, by means of a magic-lantern, all the notions of human knowledge were to be imparted to them. There were to be regular courses. The sight would educate the

mind, while the pictures would remain impressed on the brain, and thus science would, so to say, be made visible. What could be more simple than to teach universal history, natural history, geography, botany, zoölogy, anatomy, etc., etc., thus?

He had his ideas printed in tract form, and sent a copy to each Deputy, ten to each Minister, fifty to the President of the Republic, ten to each Parisian, and five to each provincial newspaper.

Then he wrote on "Street Lending-Libraries." His idea was to have little carts full of books drawn about the streets, like orange-carts are. Every householder or lodger would have a right to ten volumes a month by means of a half-penny subscription.

"The people," M. Caillard said, "will only disturb itself for the sake of its pleasures, and since it will not go to instruction, instruction must come to it," etc., etc.

His essays attracted no attention, but he sent in his application, and he got the usual formal official reply. He thought himself sure of success, but nothing came of it.

Then he made up his mind to apply personally. He begged for an interview with the Minister of Public Instruction, and he was received by a young subordinate, already very grave and important, who kept touching the buttons of electric-bells to summon ushers, and footmen, and officials inferior to himself. He declared to M. Caillard that his matter was going on quite favorably, and advised him to continue his remarkable labors. So M. Caillard set at it again.

M. Rosselin, the Deputy, seemed now to take a great interest in his success, and gave him a lot of

excellent, practical advice. Rosselin was decorated, although nobody knew exactly what he had done to deserve such a distinction.

He told Caillard what new studies he ought to undertake; he introduced him to learned Societies which took up particularly obscure points of science, in the hope of gaining credit and honors thereby; and he even took him under his wing at the Ministry.

One day, when he came to lunch with his friend (for several months past he had constantly taken his meals there), he said to him in a whisper as he shook hands: "I have just obtained a great favor for you. The Committee on Historical Works is going to intrust you with a commission. There are some researches to be made in various libraries in France."

Caillard was so delighted that he could scarcely eat or drink, and a week later he set out. He went from town to town, studying catalogues, rummaging in lofts full of dusty volumes, and was a bore to all the librarians.

One day, happening to be at Rouen, he thought he should like to embrace his wife, whom he had not seen for more than a week, so he took the nine o'clock train, which would land him at home by twelve at night.

He had his latchkey, so he went in without making any noise, delighted at the idea of the surprise he was going to give her. She had locked herself in. How tiresome! However, he cried out through the door:

"Jeanne, it is I."

She must have been very frightened, for he heard her jump out of bed and speak to herself, as if she were

in a dream. Then she went to her dressing-room, opened and closed the door, and went quickly up and down her room barefoot two or three times, shaking the furniture till the vases and glasses sounded. Then at last she asked:

"Is it you, Alexander?"

"Yes, yes," he replied; "make haste and open the door."

As soon as she had done so she threw herself into his arms, exclaiming:

"Oh! what a fright! What a surprise! What a pleasure!"

He began to undress himself methodically, like he did everything, and from a chair he took his overcoat, which he was in the habit of hanging up in the hall. But, suddenly, he remained motionless, struck dumb with astonishment—there was a red ribbon in the buttonhole!

"Why," he stammered, "this—this—this overcoat has got the rosette in it!"

In a second his wife threw herself on him, and, taking it from his hands, she said:

"No! you have made a mistake—give it to me."

But he still held it by one of the sleeves, without letting it go, repeating, in a half-dazed manner:

"Oh! Why? Just explain. Whose overcoat is it? It is not mine, as it has the Legion of Honor on it."

She tried to take it from him, terrified, and hardly able to say:

"Listen—listen—give it me—I must not tell you—it is a secret—listen to me."

But he grew angry, and turned pale:

"I want to know how this overcoat comes to be here? It does not belong to me."

Then she almost screamed at him:

"Yes it does; listen—swear to me—well—you are decorated."

She did not intend to joke at his expense.

He was so overcome that he let the overcoat fall, and dropped into an armchair.

"I am—you say I am—decorated?"

"Yes, but it is a secret, a great secret."

She had put the glorious garment into a cupboard, and came to her husband pale and trembling.

"Yes," she continued, "it is a new overcoat that I have had made for you. But I swore that I would not tell you anything about it, as it will not be officially announced for a month or six weeks, and you were not to have known till your return from your business journey. M. Rosselin managed it for you."

"Rosselin!" he contrived to utter in his joy; "he has obtained the decoration for me? He— Oh!"

And he was obliged to drink a glass of water.

A little piece of white paper had fallen to the floor out of the pocket of the overcoat. Caillard picked it up; it was a visiting-card, and he read out:

"Rosselin—Deputy."

"You see how it is," said his wife.

He almost cried with joy, and, a week later, it was announced in the "Journal Officiel" that M. Caillard had been awarded the Legion of Honor on account of his exceptional services.

A CRISIS

A BIG fire was burning and the tea-table was set for two. The Count de Sallure threw his hat, gloves, and fur coat on a chair, while the Countess, who had removed her opera-cloak, was smiling amiably at herself in the glass and arranging a few stray curls with her jeweled fingers. Her husband had been looking at her for the past few minutes, as if on the point of saying something, but hesitating; finally he said: "You have flirted outrageously to-night!" She looked him straight in the eyes, with an expression of triumph and defiance on her face.

"Why, certainly," she answered. She sat down, poured out the tea and her husband took his seat opposite her.

"It made me look quite — ridiculous!"

"Is this a scene?" she asked arching her brows. "Do you mean to criticise my conduct?"

"Oh, no, I only meant to say that M. Burel's attentions to you were positively improper and if I had the right—I—would not tolerate it."

"Why, my dear boy, what has come over you? You must have changed your views since last year. You did not seem to mind who courted me and who did not a year ago. When I found out that you had a mistress, a mistress whom you loved passionately, I pointed out to you then, as you did me tonight (but I had good reasons), that you were compromising yourself and Mme. de Servy, that your conduct grieved me, and made me look ridiculous, what did you answer me? That I was perfectly free, that marriage between two intelligent people was simply a partnership, a sort of social bond, but not a moral bond. Is it not true? You gave me to understand that your mistress was far more captivating than I, that she was more womanly; that is what you said: 'more womanly.' Of course, you said all this in a very nice way and I acknowledge that you did your very best to spare my feelings, for which I am very grateful to you I assure you; but I understood perfectly what you meant.

"We then decided to live practically separated; that is, under the same roof, but apart from each other. We had a child, and it was necessary to keep up appearances before the world, but you intimated that if I chose to take a lover you would not object in the least, providing it was kept secret. You even made a long and very interesting discourse on the cleverness of women in such cases; how well they could manage such things, etc., etc. I understood perfectly, my dear boy. You loved Mme. de Servy very much

at that time and my conjugal — legal — affection was an impediment to your happiness; but since then, we have lived on the very best of terms. We go out in society together, it is true, but here in our own house we are complete strangers. Now, for the past month or two, you act as if you were jealous, and I do not understand it."

"I am not jealous, my dear, but you are so young, so impulsive, that I am afraid you will expose yourself to the world's criticisms."

"You make me laugh! Your conduct would not bear a very close scrutiny. You had better not preach what you do not practice."

"Do not laugh, I pray. This is no laughing matter. I am speaking as a friend, a true friend. As to your remarks, they are very much exaggerated."

"Not at all. When you confessed to me your infatuation for Mme. de Servy, I took it for granted that you authorized me to imitate you. I have not done so—"

"Allow me to—"

"Do not interrupt me. I have not done so. I have no lover—as yet. I am looking for one, but I have not found one to suit me. He must be very nice—nicer than you are—that is a compliment, but you do not seem to appreciate it."

"This joking is entirely uncalled for."

"I am not joking at all; I am in dead earnest. I have not forgotten a single word of what you said to me a year ago and when it pleases me to do so, no matter what you may say or do, I shall take a lover. I shall do it without your even suspecting it—you will be none the wiser—like a great many others."

"How can you say such things!"

"How can I say such things? But, my dear boy, you were the first one to laugh when Mme. de Gers joked about poor, unsuspecting M. de Servy."

"That might be, but it is not becoming language for you."

"Indeed! You thought it a good joke when it concerned M. de Servy, but you do not find it so appropriate when it concerns you. What a queer lot men are! However, I am not fond of talking about such things; I simply mentioned it to see if you were ready."

"Ready—for what?"

"Ready to be deceived. When a man gets angry on hearing such things he is not quite ready. I wager that in two months you will be the first one to laugh if I mention a deceived husband to you. It is generally the case when you are the deceived one."

"Upon my word you are positively rude to-night; I have never seen you that way."

"Yes—I have changed—for the worse, but it is your fault."

"Come, my dear, let us talk seriously. I beg of you, I implore you not to let M. Burel court you as he did to-night."

"You are jealous; I knew it."

"No, no; but I do not wish to be looked upon with ridicule, and if I catch that man devouring you with his eyes, like he did to-night—I—I will thrash him!"

"Could it be possible that you are in love with me?"

"Why not? I am sure I could do much worse."

"Thanks. I am sorry for you — because I do not love you any more."

The Count gets up, walks around the tea-table, and going behind his wife, he kisses her quickly on the neck. She springs up and with flashing eyes says:

"How dare you do that? Remember, we are absolutely nothing to each other; we are complete strangers."

"Please do not get angry, I could not help it; you look so lovely to-night."

"Then I must have improved wonderfully."

"You look positively charming; your arms and shoulders are beautiful and your skin — "

"Would captivate M. Burel — "

"How mean you are! — but really, I do not recall ever having seen a woman as captivating as you are."

"You must have been fasting lately."

"What's that?"

"I say, you must have been fasting lately."

"Why — what do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. You must have fasted for some time and now you are famished. A hungry man will eat things which he will not eat at any other time. I am the neglected — dish, which you would not mind eating to-night."

"Marguerite! Who ever taught you to say those things?"

"You did. To my knowledge, you have had four mistresses. Actresses, society women, gay women etc., so how can I explain your sudden fancy for me, except by your long fast?"

"You will think me rude, brutal, but I have fallen in love with you for the second time. I love you madly!"

"Well, well! Then you—wish to—"

"Exactly."

"To-night?"

"Oh, Marguerite!"

"There, you are scandalized again. My dear boy, let us talk quietly. We are strangers, are we not? I am your wife, it is true, but I am—free. I intended to engage my affection elsewhere, but I will give you the preference; providing—I receive the same compensation."

"I do not understand you; what do you mean?"

"I will speak more clearly. Am I as good-looking as your mistresses?"

"A thousand times better."

"Better than the nicest one?"

"Yes, a thousand times."

"How much did she cost you in three months?"

"Really—what on earth do you mean?"

"I mean, how much did you spend on the costliest of your mistresses, in jewelry, carriages, suppers, etc., in three months?"

"How do I know!"

"You ought to know. Let us say for instance, five thousand francs a month—is that about right?"

"Yes—about that."

"Well, my dear boy, give me five thousand francs and I will be yours for a month, beginning from to-night."

"Marguerite! Are you crazy?"

"No, I am not; but just as you say. Good night!"

The Countess entered her boudoir. A vague perfume permeated the whole room. The Count appeared in the doorway:

"How lovely it smells in here!"

"Do you think so? I always use Peau d'Espagne; I never use any other perfume."

"Really? I did not notice—it is lovely."

"Possibly, but be kind enough to go; I want to go to bed."

"Marguerite!"

"Will you please go?"

The Count came in and sat on a chair.

Said the Countess: "You will not go? Very well."

She slowly takes off her waist, revealing her white arms and neck, then she lifts her arms above her head to loosen her hair.

The Count took a step toward her.

The Countess: "Do not come near me or I shall get real angry, do you hear?"

He caught her in his arms and tried to kiss her. She quickly took a tumbler of perfumed water standing on the toilette-table and dashed it into his face.

He was terribly angry. He stepped back a few paces and murmured:

"How stupid of you!"

"Perhaps—but you know my conditions—five thousand francs!"

"Preposterous!"

"Why, pray?"

"Why? Because—who ever heard of a man paying his wife!"

"Oh!—how horribly rude you are!"

"I suppose I am rude, but I repeat, the idea of paying one's wife is preposterous! Positively stupid!"

"Is it not much worse to pay a gay woman? It certainly would be stupid when you have a wife at home."

"That may be, but I do not wish to be ridiculous."

The Countess sat down on the bed and took off her stockings, revealing her bare, pink feet.

The Count approached a little nearer and said tenderly:

"What an odd idea of yours, Marguerite!"

"What idea?"

"To ask me for five thousand francs!"

"Odd? Why should it be odd? Are we not strangers? You say you are in love with me; all well and good. You cannot marry me, as I am already your wife, so you buy me. *Mon dieu!* have you not bought other women? Is it not much better to give me that money than to a strange woman who would squander it? Come, you will acknowledge that it is a novel idea to actually pay your own wife! An intelligent man like you ought to see how amusing it is; besides, a man never really loves anything unless it costs him a lot of money. It would add new zest to our—conjugal love, by comparing it with your—illegitimate love. Am I not right?"

She goes toward the bell.

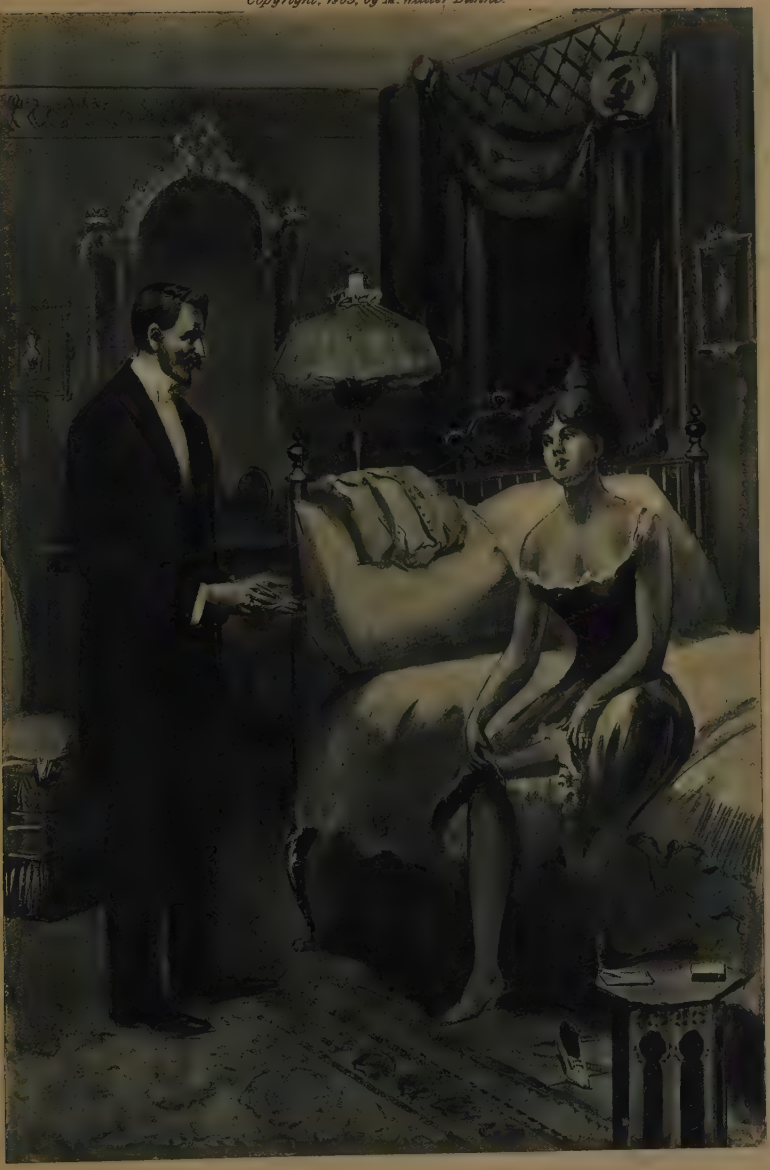
"Now then, sir, if you do not go I will ring for my maid!"

The Count stands perplexed, displeased, and suddenly, taking a handful of bank-notes out of his pocket, he throws them at his wife saying:

AFTER AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY LUCIEN METIVET.

"What an [illegible] Marguerite!"

Copyright, 1903, by M. Walter Dunne.



"Here are six thousand, you witch, but remember—"

The Countess picked up the money, counted it, and said:

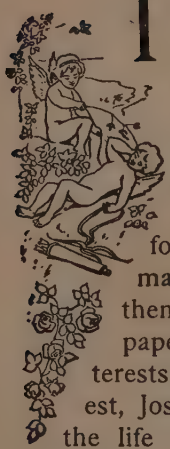
"What?"

"You must not get used to it."

She burst out laughing and said to him:

"Five thousand francs each month, or else I shall send you back to your actresses, and if you are pleased with me—I shall ask for more."

GRAVEYARD SIRENS



THE five friends had finished their dinner; there were two bachelors and three married men, all middle-aged and wealthy. They assembled thus once a month, in memory of old times, and lingered to gossip over their coffee till late at night. Many a happy evening was spent in this way, for they were fond of one another's society, and had remained closely united. Conversation among them was a sort of review of the daily papers, commenting on everything that interests and amuses Parisians. One of the cleverest, Joseph de Bardon, was a bachelor. He lived the life of a boulevardier most thoroughly and fantastically, without being debauched or depraved. It interested him, and as he was still young, being barely forty, he enjoyed it keenly. A man of the world in the broadest and best sense of the word, he possessed a great deal of wit without much depth, a general knowledge without real learning, quick perception without serious penetration; but his adventures and observations furnished him many amusing

stories, which he told with so much philosophy and humor that society voted him very intellectual.

He was a favorite after-dinner speaker, always having some story to relate to which his friends looked forward. Presently he began to tell a story without being asked. Leaning on the table with a half-filled glass of brandy in front of his plate, in the smoky atmosphere filled with the fragrance of coffee, he seemed perfectly at ease, just as some beings are entirely at home in certain places and under certain conditions—as a goldfish in its aquarium, for instance, or a nun in her cloister.

Puffing at his cigar, he said:

"A rather curious thing happened to me a little while ago."

All exclaimed at once: "Tell us about it!"

Presently he continued:

"You all know how I love to roam around the city, like a collector in search of antiquities. I enjoy watching people and things. About the middle of September, the weather being very fine, I went for a walk one afternoon, without a definite purpose. Why do we men always have the vague impulse to call on some pretty woman? We review them in our mind, compare their respective charms, the interest they arouse in us, and finally decide in favor of the one that attracts us most.

"But when the sun shines brightly and the air is balmy, sometimes we altogether lose the desire for calling.

"That day the sun was bright and the air balmy, so I simply lighted a cigar and started for the Boulevard Extérieur. As I was sauntering along, I thought I

would take a look around the cemetery of Montmartre. Now, I have always liked cemeteries because they sadden and rest me; and I need that influence at times. Besides, many of my friends are laid to rest there, and I go to see them once in a while.

"As it happens, I once buried a romance in this particular cemetery,—an old love of mine, a charming little woman whose memory awakens all kinds of regrets in me—I often dream beside her grave. All is over for her now!

"I like graveyards because they are such immense, densely populated cities. Just think of all the bodies buried in that small space, of the countless generations of Parisians laid there forever, eternally entombed in the little vaults of their little graves marked by a cross or a stone, while the living—fools that they are!—take up so much room and make such a fuss.

"Cemeteries have some monuments quite as interesting as those to be seen in the museums. Cavaignac's tomb I liken, without comparing it, to that masterpiece of Jean Gonjon, the tombstone of Louis de Brézé in the subterranean chapel in the cathedral of Rouen. My friends, all so-called modern and realistic art originated there. That reproduction of Louis de Brézé is more life-like and terrible, more convulsed with agony, than any one of the statues that decorate modern tombs.

"In Montmartre is Baudin's monument, and it is quite imposing; also the tombs of Gautier and Mürger, where the other day I found a solitary wreath of yellow immortelles, laid there—by whom do you suppose? Perhaps by the last *grisette*, grown old, and possibly become a janitress in the neighborhood! It's

a pretty little statue by Millet, but it is ruined by neglect and accumulated filth. Sing of youth, O Mürger!

"Well, I entered the cemetery, filled with a certain sadness, not too poignant, a feeling suggesting such thoughts as this: The place is not very cheerful, but I'm not to be put here yet.

"The impression of autumn, a warm dampness smelling of dead leaves, the pale, anæmic rays of the sun, intensified and poetized the solitude of this place, which reminds one of death and of the end of all things.

"I walked slowly along the alleys of graves where neighbors no longer visit, no longer sleep together, nor read the papers. I began reading the epitaphs. There is nothing more amusing in the world. Labiche and Meilhac have never made me laugh as much as some of these tombstone inscriptions. I tell you these crosses and marble slabs on which the relatives of the dead have poured out their regrets and their wishes for the happiness of the departed, their hopes of reunion—the hypocrites!—make better reading than Balzac's funniest tales! But what I love in Montmartre are the abandoned plots filled with yew-trees and cypress, the resting-place of those departed long ago. However, the green trees nourished by the bodies will soon be felled to make room for those that have recently passed away, whose graves will be there, under little marble slabs.

"After loitering awhile, I felt tired, and decided to pay my faithful tribute to my little friend's memory. When I reached the grave, my heart was very sad. Poor child! she was so sweet and loving, so fair and white—and now—should her grave be reopened—

"Bending over the iron railing I murmured a prayer, which she probably never heard, and I turned to leave, when I caught sight of a woman in deep mourning kneeling beside a neighboring grave. Her crape veil was thrown back, disclosing her blond hair, which seemed illumined under the darkness of her hat. I forgot to leave.

"She seemed bowed with sorrow. She had buried her face in her hands, apparently lost in deep thought. With closed lids, as rigid as a statue, she was living over torturing memories and seemed herself a corpse mourning a corpse. Presently I saw that she was weeping, as there was a convulsive movement of her back and shoulders. Suddenly she uncovered her face. Her eyes, brimming with tears, were charming. For a moment she gazed around as if awakening from a nightmare. She saw me looking at her and quickly hid her face again, greatly abashed. Now, with convulsive sobs she bent her head slowly over the tombstone. She rested her forehead against it, and her veil, falling around her, covered the whiteness of the beloved sepulcher with a dark shroud. I heard her moan and then saw her fall to the ground in a faint.

"I rushed to her side and began slapping her hands and breathing on her temples, while reading this simple inscription on the tombstone:

"'Here lies Louis-Théodore Carrel, Captain in the Marine Infantry, killed by the enemy in Tonkin. Pray for his soul.'

"This death was quite recent. I was moved almost to tears, and renewed my efforts to revive the poor girl. At last she came to. I am not so

very bad-looking, and my face must have shown how upset I was, for her very first glance showed me that she was likely to be grateful for my care. Between sobs she told me of her marriage to the officer who had been killed in Tonkin within a year after their wedding. He had married her for love, she being an orphan and possessing nothing above the required dowry.

"I consoled her, comforted her, and assisted her to her feet, saying:

"'You must not stay here. Come away.'

"'I am unable to walk,' she whispered.

"'Let me help you,' I said.

"'Thank you, you are very kind,' she murmured. 'Did you also come to mourn some one?'

"'Yes, Madame.'

"'A woman?'

"'Yes, Madame.'

"'Your wife?'

"'A friend.'

"'One may love a friend just as much as a wife, for passion knows no law,' said the lady.

"'Yes, Madame,' I replied.

"And so we left the spot together, she leaning on me and I almost carrying her through the alleys. As we came out, she murmured:

"'I'm afraid that I'm going to faint.'

"'Wouldn't you like to take something, Madame?' I inquired.

"'Yes,' she said, 'I would.'

"I discovered a restaurant near at hand, where the friends of the dead gather to celebrate the end of their painful duty. We went in, and I made her

drink a cup of hot tea, which appeared to give her renewed strength.

"A faint smile dawned on her lips and she began telling me about herself: how terrible it was to go through life all alone, to be alone at home day and night, to have no one on whom to lavish love, confidence, and intimacy.

"It all seemed sincere and sounded well coming from her. I was softened. She was very young, perhaps twenty. I paid her several compliments that appeared to please her, and as it was growing dark I offered to take her home in a cab. She accepted. In the carriage we were so close to each other that we could feel the warmth of our bodies through our clothing, which really is the most intoxicating thing in the world.

"When the cab stopped in front of her home she said:

"'I hardly feel able to walk upstairs, for I live on the fourth floor. You have already been so kind, that I am going to ask you to assist me to my rooms.'

"I consented gladly. She walked up slowly, breathing heavily at each step. In front of her door she added:

"'Do come in for a few minutes, so that I can thank you again for your kindness.'

"And I, of course, followed her.

"Her apartment was modest, even a trifle poor, but well-kept and in good taste.

"We sat down side by side on a small divan, and she again began to speak of her loneliness.

"Then she rang for the maid, so as to offer me some refreshments. But the girl failed to appear, and

I joyfully concluded that this maid probably came only in the morning, and was a sort of scrub-woman.

"She had taken off her hat. How pretty she was! Her clear eyes looked steadily at me, so clear and so steady that a great temptation came to me, to which I promptly yielded. Clasping her in my arms, I kissed her again and again on her half-closed lids.

"She repelled me, struggling to free herself and repeating:

"'Do stop—do end it—'

"What did she mean to imply by this word? Under such conditions, to 'end' could have at least two meanings. In order to silence her, I passed from her eyes to her lips, and gave to the word 'end' the conclusion I preferred. She did not resist very much, and as our eyes met after this insult to the memory of the departed captain, I saw that her expression was one of tender resignation, which quickly dispelled my misgivings.

"Then I grew attentive and gallant. After an hour's chat I asked her:

"'Where do you dine?'

"'In a small restaurant near by.'

"'All alone?'

"'Why, yes.'

"'Will you take dinner with me?'

"'Where?'

"'In a good restaurant on the Boulevard.'

"She hesitated a little, but at last consented, consoling herself with the argument that she was so desperately lonely, and adding, 'I must put on a lighter gown.'

"She retired to her room, and when she emerged she was dressed in a simple gray frock that made her look exquisitely slender. She apparently had different costumes for street and for cemetery wear!

"Our dinner was most pleasant and cordial. She drank some champagne, thereby becoming very animated and lively, and we returned to her apartment together.

"This *liaison*, begun among tombstones, lasted about three weeks. But man tires of everything and especially of women. So I pleaded an urgent trip and left her. Of course, I managed to be generous, for which she was duly thankful, making me promise and even swear that I would come back, for she really seemed to care a little for me.

"In the meantime I formed other attachments, and a month or so went by without the memory of this love being vivid enough to bring me back to her. Still, I had not forgotten her. She haunted me like a mystery, a psychological problem, an unsolved question.

"I can't tell why, but one day I imagined that I should find her in the cemetery. So I went back. I walked around a long time without meeting anyone but the usual visitors of the place, mourners who had not broken off all relations with their dead. The grave of the captain killed in Tonkin was deserted, without flowers, or wreaths.

"As I was passing through another part of this great city of Death, I suddenly saw a couple in deep mourning coming toward me through one of the narrow paths hedged with crosses. When they drew near, Oh, surprise! I recognized—her! She saw me

and blushed. As I brushed past her, she gave me a little wink that meant clearly: Don't recognize me, and also seemed to say: Do come back.

"The man who accompanied her was about fifty years old, fine-looking and distinguished, an officer of the Legion of Honor. He was leading her just as I had, when we left the cemetery together.

"I was utterly nonplussed, reluctant to believe what my eyes had just seen, and I wondered to what strange tribe of creatures this graveyard huntress belonged. Was she merely a clever courtesan, an inspired prostitute, who haunted cemeteries for men disconsolate at the loss of some woman, a mistress or a wife, and hungering for past caresses? Is it a profession? Are the cemeteries worked like the streets? Are there graveyard sirens? Or had she alone the idea—wonderful for its deep philosophy—to profit by the amorous regrets awakened in these awful places? I would have given a great deal to know whose widow she was that day!"

GROWING OLD

THE two friends had finished dinner. From the window of the *café* they saw the Boulevard full of people. They felt the warm zephyrs which prevail in Paris on sweet summer nights and make travelers raise their heads and desire to go out, to go down, one knows not where, under the leaves, and dream of rivers lighted by the moon, of glow-worms, and of nightingales.

One of them, Henry Simon, sighed profoundly and said:

"Ah! I am getting old. It is sad. Formerly on evenings like this I felt the devil in my body. Now, I feel only regrets. How quickly life goes!"

He was already a little stout and very bald; he was perhaps forty-five years old.

The other, Peter Carnier, was older, but thinner and more lively; he replied:

"As for me, my friend, I have grown old without perceiving it the least in the world. I was always gay, a jolly fellow, vigorous and all the rest. Now,

as one looks at himself each day in the mirror, he does not perceive the work that age is accomplishing, because it is slow and regular, and modifies his visage so gradually that the transition is unseen. Only for this we should die of chagrin after but two or three years' ravages. But we are not able to appreciate them. In order to take a reckoning it would be necessary to go six months without looking at ourselves; and then, what a blow!

"And the women, my dear, how I pity them, the poor beings. All their happiness, all their power, all their life is in their beauty, which lasts but ten years.

"I, then, grew old without suspecting it; I believed myself a young man, although I was nearly fifty years old. Never having felt an infirmity of any sort, I went along happy and tranquil.

"The revelation of my decadence came to me in a simple but terrible fashion, which made me downcast for nearly six months. Since then I have accepted the part.

"I have often been in love, like all men, but once in particular. I met her at the seashore at Etretat, about twelve years ago, a little after the war. There is nothing so pretty as this shore in the morning at the bathing hour. It is small, rounded like a horseshoe, incased in those high, white cliffs, pierced with those singular holes they call ports, one enormous one, extending into the sea like a giant's leg, the other opposite squat and round. A crowd of women assembles here on the right side of the shuffleboard, which they cover like a bright garden with their brilliant costumes — this box between the high rocks.

The sun falls full upon the coast, upon umbrellas of all shades, upon the sea of a greenish blue. And all is gay, charming, smiling to the eyes. You seat yourself near the water to watch the bathers. They descend in a bathrobe of flannel which they throw off with a pretty motion upon reaching the fringe of the foam from the short waves; they go into the sea with a little rapid step which is arrested sometimes by a delicious cold shiver, or a slight suffocation.

"Few can stand this trial of the bath. It is there that one can judge them from the calf to the throat. The going out especially reveals the weak, although salt water may be a powerful help to flabby flesh.

"The first time that I saw this young woman thus, I was delighted, ravished. She held good, she held firm. Then there are some faces whose charm enters into us suddenly, invades us at a single blow. It seemed to me that I had found the woman that I was born to love. I had that sensation and it was like a shock.

"I had myself presented and was immediately captured as I never was before. She ravaged my heart. It is a frightful and delicious thing, the undergoing thus the domination of a woman. It is almost a punishment, and at the same time, an unbelievable happiness. Her look, her smile, her hair at the nape of the neck when the breeze moved it, all the little lines of her face, the least movement of her features delighted me, and made me extremely fond of her. She took possession of me through all my being, by her gestures, her attitudes, even by the things she carried, which became bewitching to me. I would wait to see her veil thrown upon some piece of furniture, her gloves

upon an armchair. Her costumes seemed to me inimitable. No one had hats like hers.

"She was married and the husband came every Saturday to remain until Monday. He seemed to me very indifferent. I was not at all jealous of him; I know not why, but never a being seemed to have less importance in life, or attract less of my attention than this man.

"How I loved her! And how beautiful she was, and gracious and young! She was youth, elegance, and freshness, even. Never before had I felt what a pretty being a woman is, so distinguished and delicate, so full of charm and grace! Never had I understood what a seducing beauty there is in the curve of her cheek, in the movement of her lips, in the round folds of her little ear, in the form of that simple organ which we call the nose.

"This lasted three months and then I departed for America, my heart bruised and full of despair. But the thought of her remained in me persistent, triumphant. She possessed me at a distance as she had when I was near her.

"Some years passed. I had not forgotten her. Her charming image remained before my eyes and in my heart. My tenderness remained faithful to her, a tranquil tenderness now, something like a much-loved memory of the most beautiful, most attractive thing I had met in life.

"Twelve years are such a little thing in a man's existence! One scarcely feels them pass! They go one after another, these years, gently and quickly, slowly or hurriedly, each long but so soon finished!

And they add so rapidly and leave so little trace behind them; they vanish so completely that in looking back over the time passed one cannot perceive anything, and cannot comprehend how it is that they have made him old. It seemed to me truly, that only a few months separated me from that charming season on the beach at Etretat.

"Last spring I went to dine at Maisons-Lafitte at the house of some friends. Just as the train was starting, a large woman got into my car, followed by four little girls. I scarcely glanced at this large, round mother, with a face like a full moon incased in a be-ribboned hat.

"She breathed heavily, being out of breath from a quick walk. The children began to babble. I opened my newspaper and began to read.

"We were just passing Asnières, when my neighbor said to me suddenly:

"'Pardon me, sir, but are you not Mr. Carnier?'

"'Yes, Madame.'

"Then she began to laugh, the laugh of a contented, brave woman, but a little sad, nevertheless.

"'You do not recognize me?' said she.

"I hesitated. I fully believed that I had somewhere seen that face; but where? and when? I answered:

"'Yes—and no—I certainly do recognize you, but cannot recall your name.'

"She blushed a little as she said: 'Mrs. Julie Lefevre.'

"Never have I received such a blow. For a second it seemed to me that all was finished for me. I felt that a veil had been torn away from before my

eyes and that I was about to discover something frightful and wounding.

"It was she! That great, gross, common woman, she? And she had borne these four girls since I had seen her. And these four beings astonished me as much as the mother herself. They had come from her; they were tall already, had taken her place in life. She no longer counted, she, that marvel of coquettish, refined grace. I had seen her yesterday, it seemed to me, and I found her again like this! Was it possible? A violent grief attacked my heart, and also a revolt against Nature, even, an unreasonable indignation against her brutal work, so infamous and destructive.

"I looked at her aghast. Then I took her by the hand, and the tears mounted to my eyes. I wept for her young, I wept for her dead. For I was not acquainted with this large lady.

"She, also affected, stammered:

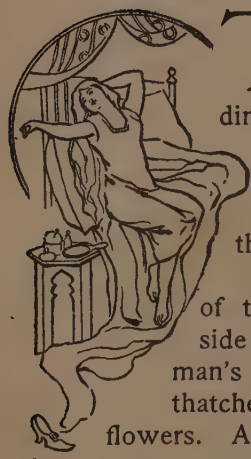
"'I am much changed, am I not? What can we expect after so long? You see I have become a mother, nothing but a mother, a good mother. Adieu to all else, it is finished. Oh! I never thought that you would not recognize me if we met! And you, too, are changed; it took me some time to be sure that I was not deceived. You are quite gray. Think of it. Twelve years! twelve years! My eldest daughter is already ten years old.'

"I looked at the child. I found in her something of the former charm of her mother, but something still undecisive, not yet formed, but near at hand. And life appeared as rapid to me as a train which passes.

"We arrived at Maisons-Lafitte. I kissed the hand of my old friend. I had found nothing to say to her but the most frightful commonplaces. I was too upset to talk,

"That evening, all alone in my room, I looked at myself for a long time in my glass. And I ended by recalling myself as I was, of looking back in thought to my brown mustache and my black hair and the physiognomy of my young face. Now I was old. Adieu!"

A FRENCH ENOCH ARDEN



THE sea lashes the shore with its short and monstrous waves. Little white clouds are scudding quickly across the great blue sky, swept by a rapid wind, like birds; and the village, in the fold of the valley which runs down to the ocean, lies broiling in the sun.

Quite at the entrance is the house of the Martin-Levesques, alone, at the side of the road. It is a little fisherman's cottage, with clay walls and a thatched roof adorned with blue iris flowers. A garden as big as a handkerchief, where sprout some onions, a few cabbages, some parsley, some chervil, squares itself before the door. A hedge hems it in along the roadside.

The man has gone fishing, and the woman, before the lodge, is repairing the meshes of a big brown net, hung on the wall like a great spider's web. A little girl of fourteen at the garden entrance, seated in a cane chair, leaning backward and resting her arm

on the fence, is mending linen, the linen of the poor, already pieced and patched.

Another small girl, a year younger, is rocking in her arms a very little baby, yet without gestures or words; and the two youngsters of two or three years sitting on the ground are playing garden with their clumsy hands and throwing fistfuls of dust in each other's face.

No one speaks. Only the little rascal whom the girl is trying to put to sleep cries steadily, with a sharp, weak little voice. A cat is sleeping at the window, and some blooming gillyflowers make, at the foot of the wall, a fine cushion of white blossoms, over which flies are buzzing.

The little girl who is sewing near the entrance calls suddenly:

"Mamma."

"What is the matter with you?" replied the mother.

"There he is again."

She had been uneasy since morning because there was a man prowling about the house; an old man who seemed to be poor. They had observed him as they were going with their father to the boat to see him embark. He was seated on the edge of the ditch opposite their gate, and when they came back they found him still there, looking at the house.

He seemed ill and very wretched. He had not stirred for more than an hour; then, seeing he would be considered a malefactor he had risen and departed, dragging one leg.

But soon they had seen him return with his slow and weary step; and again he had sat down, a little further away this time, as if to watch them.

The mother and daughters were afraid. The mother especially because she was of a timorous nature, and because her husband Levesque was not expected to come from the sea until nightfall.

Her husband's name was Levesque, hers was Martin, and they were called the Martin-Levesques. This is why: she had married for her first husband a man named Martin, who went to Newfoundland every summer fishing for cod.

After two years of married life she had a little girl by him, and another three months after the craft which carried her husband, the "Two Sisters," a three-masted bark from Dieppe, disappeared.

No news was ever received from it; none of its crew ever came back: it was considered to be a total wreck.

The Martin woman waited for her second husband ten years, bringing up her children with great difficulty; then, as she was a good, strong woman, a fisherman of the neighborhood, Levesque, a widower with a boy, asked her in marriage. She married him and had two children by him in three years.

They lived painfully, laboriously. Bread was dear, and meat almost unknown in the household. They ran in debt at times with the baker, in winter, during the stormy months. The little ones were well, nevertheless. People said:

"They are brave folk, the Martin-Levesques. The wife is a hard worker and Levesque has not his equal for fishing."

The little girl seated at the gate repeated: "You would think that he knew us. Perhaps it is some poor man from Epreville or from Auzebogo."

But the mother was not deceived. No, no, it wasn't anyone of the country, surely!

As he moved no more than a stake, and as he kept his eyes glued to the Martin-Levesques' cottage, the woman became furious, and fear making her brave she seized a shovel and went out of the door.

"What are you doing there?" she called to the vagabond.

He answered in a gruff voice:

"I am taking the fresh air! Does that do you any harm?"

She replied:

"Why are you spying like this on my house?"

The man replied:

"I am not injuring anybody. Isn't it permitted to sit down by the roadside?"

Not finding an answer ready, she went back into the house.

The day passed slowly. Toward noon the man disappeared, but he came by again toward five o'clock. They did not see any more of him during the evening.

Levesque returned at dusk. They told him about it. He remarked:

"It is some skulker or good-for-nothing."

He went to bed undisturbed, while his wife dreamed of this prowler who had looked at her so strangely.

When day came, there was a great wind, and the sailor, seeing that he could not start out on the sea, helped his wife at mending nets.

About nine o'clock, the eldest daughter, a Martin, who had gone out to get some bread, came back running with a frightened air, and cried:

"Ma, there he is again!"

The mother was startled and, very pale, said to her husband:

"Go, and speak to him, Levesque, so that he won't watch us like this, because it worries me to death."

And Levesque, a big sailor with a complexion like a brick, a thickened beard, blue eyes, strong neck, always wearing woolen garments, on account of the wind and rain at sea, walked out quietly and approached the straggler.

And they began to talk.

The mother and the children looked on from the distance, anxious and trembling.

Suddenly the unknown rose and came toward the house with Levesque.

The wife, terrified, drew back.

Her husband said to her:

"Give him a piece of bread and a glass of cider. He hasn't eaten anything since the day before yesterday."

They both entered the house, followed by the woman and the children. The vagabond sat down and began to eat, with his head lowered beneath the glances.

The mother, standing up, scrutinized him. The two big girls, the Martins, leaning against the door, one of them holding the latest baby, fixed their eager eyes upon him, and the two boys, seated in the ashes of the fireplace, had stopped playing with the black kettle to look at this stranger, too.

Levesque, having taken a chair, asked him:

"Do you come from a distance?"

"I have come from Cette."

"On foot as far as that?"

"Yes, on foot. A man has to walk when he cannot afford to ride."

"And where are you going?"

"I was coming here."

"You know some one here?"

"That might be."

They were silent. He ate slowly, although he was famished, and he took a sip of cider after each mouthful of bread. He had a worn, wrinkled face and seemed to have suffered much.

Levesque brusquely asked him:

"What is your name?"

"My name is Martin."

A strange shudder shook the mother. She took a step forward, as if to scan the vagabond more closely, and stood opposite him, with her arms hanging down and her mouth open. Nobody said anything further. Levesque finally resumed:

"Are you from here?"

He answered: "I am from here." And as he raised his head the woman's eyes and his met and remained fixed upon each other, as if their glances were fastened.

She suddenly said, in a changed voice, low and trembling:

"It is you, my husband?"

He slowly replied:

"Yes, it is I."

He did not move, continuing to masticate the bread.

Levesque more surprised than moved stammered:

"It is you, Martin?"

The other man said simply:

"Yes, it is I."

And the second husband asked:

"Where have you come from?"

He first told his story.

"From the coast of Africa I was wrecked on a reef. Three of us were saved, Picard, Vatinel, and me. And then we were captured by savages who held us twelve years. Picard and Vatinel are dead. An English traveler passing that way took me and brought me to Cette, and here I am."

The woman began to weep, her face in her apron.

Levesque said:

"What shall we do now?"

Martin asked:

"You are her husband?"

Levesque replied:

"Yes, I am."

They looked at each other and were silent.

Then Martin gazing at the children in a circle around him nodded toward two little girls.

"Those are mine."

Levesque said:

"They are yours."

He did not rise, he did not kiss them; he merely remarked:

"Good God! how tall they are."

Levesque repeated:

"What shall we do?"

Martin perplexed, could not tell. Finally he decided:

"I will do as you wish. I don't want to injure you. It is vexing all the same, considering the house.

I have two children, you have three, each his own. But the mother, is she yours or mine? I will consent to whatever you wish, but the house is mine, since my father left it to me, since I was born here, and since there are papers for it at the notary's."

The woman still wept, with little sobs stifled in the blue cloth of her apron. The two tall girls drew near and looked at their father with uneasiness.

He had finished eating. But Levesque had an idea:

"We must go to the priest, he will decide."

Martin rose, and as he approached his wife, she threw herself sobbing upon his breast.

"My husband! you are here! Martin, my poor Martin, you are here!"

And she held him in her arms, suddenly pierced by a breath of olden times, by a great shock of memories which recalled to her the days when she was twenty and their first embraces.

Martin, himself moved, kissed her on the cap. The two children, in the corner, began to howl together, seeing their mother weep, and the last born, in the arms of the second Martin girl, shrieked with the sharp sound of a cracked fife.

Levesque, standing up, waited:

"Come," he said, "we must get this straightened out."

Martin released his wife, and as he looked at his two daughters, their mother said to them:

"Kiss your father, at least."

They approached him together, astonished, and a little afraid. And he kissed them one after the other, on both cheeks, with a big peasant's smack. And

seeing this unknown approach, the little child uttered such piercing cries that it almost went into convulsions.

Then the two men went out together.

As they passed the *Café du Commerce,* Levesque asked:

"Shall we have a little drop?"

"I would like it very much," said Martin.

They entered and sat down in a room which was vacant.

"Ho! Chicot, two bottles of wine, good wine. This is Martin who has come back, Martin of the 'Two Sisters,' which was lost."

And the tavern-keeper, three glasses in one hand and a *carafe* in the other, approached, large of paunch, ruddy, fat, and asked with a quiet air:

"What, you here, Martin?"

Martin replied: "I am here."

JULIE ROMAIN

In the springtime, two years ago, I was walking along the shores of the Mediterranean. What is more charming than to dream while walking over a lonely road? One enjoys the sunlight and the caressing wind when climbing the mountains, or strolling by the seashore. And in his day-dreams, what illusions, what love-poems, what adventures pass in two hours through the mind of one who idles along a road. Every possible hope, confused and joyous, penetrates him with the warm, light air; he inhales them with the breeze, and they give birth in his being to an appetite for happiness that increases like the hunger he acquires in walking. Sweet and fleeting thoughts sing in his soul as he comes closer to nature.

I followed the road that leads from Saint Raphael to Italy, or rather, I made my way through that superb and changing scenery which seems made to be celebrated in all the love-poems of the earth. It seemed to me a pity to think that, from Cannes to

Monaco, scarcely anyone comes into this part of country save to make trouble, to juggle with money, or to display, under this delicious sky and in this garden of roses and oranges, base vanities, stupid pretensions, and vile covetousness, and to show the human mind as it is—servile, ignorant, arrogant, and grasping.

Suddenly, in one of the curves of the ravishing bays I saw a group of villas, four or five only, fronting on the sea at the foot of the mountain. Behind them was a wild forest of pines, which covered two great valleys, apparently without roads or outlet. Involuntarily I stopped in front of the gate of one of these châlets, so pretty was it,—a little white cottage with brown decorations, covered with roses that climbed to the roof. The garden was filled with flowers of all colors and every size, coquettishly arranged in studied disorder. The lawn was dotted with flower-beds; a vase with trailing vines stood on the steps of the veranda, and over the windows hung clusters of purple grapes, while the stone balustrade that surrounded this charming dwelling was covered with enormous red morning-glories, that looked like spots of blood. Behind the house stretched a long alley of orange-trees in flower, which reached as far as the foot of the mountain.

On the door of the villa, in small, gilt letters, I read this name: "Villa d'Antan." I asked myself what poet or fairy inhabited the place, what inspired recluse had discovered it and created this dream of a dwelling, that appeared to spring from masses of flowers.

A workman was breaking stones on the road at a

short distance. I asked him the name of the proprietor of the châlet. He replied that it belonged to the famous Madame Julie Romain.

Julie Romain! In my childhood I had often heard her spoken of, — the great actress, the rival of Rachel! No woman had been more applauded, or more loved, — more loved, above all! How many duels had been fought and how many suicides had been committed because of her, and how many wild adventures had been undertaken for her sake! What was her age now, that seductress? Sixty, — no, seventy — seventy-five years. Julie Romain! Here, in this house! I recalled again the emotion created throughout France (I was twelve years old then) by her flight to Sicily with one lover, a poet, after her notorious quarrel with another adorer.

She fled with her new love one evening, after a first-night representation, during which the audience had applauded her for half an hour and called her out eleven times in succession. She went away with the poet in a post-chaise, as was the custom then; they had crossed the sea in order to love in that antique island, daughter of Greece, under the immense grove of orange-trees that surrounds Palermo, which is called the "Conque d'Ov."

Their ascent of Ætna was gossiped about, and also how they had hung over the immense crater, arm in arm, cheek against cheek, as if they desired to throw themselves into the gulf of fire.

He was dead now, the writer of affecting verses, of poems so brilliant that they dazzled a whole generation, and so subtile and mysterious that they opened a new world to other poets.

The other lover was dead also, the abandoned one, who created for her those musical expressions that remain in all hearts,—expressions of triumph and despair that are at once intoxicating and heartrending.

She lived here, in this house veiled with flowers!

I hesitated no longer. I rang the bell. A domestic came to open the door, a boy of eighteen years, awkward and shy, with hands that appeared to be in his way. I wrote on my card a gallant compliment to the old actress, and an ardent prayer that she would receive me. Perhaps she might know my name and allow me to see her.

The young valet disappeared, but soon returned and asked me to follow him. He showed me into a neat drawing-room, correct in every detail, in the style of Louis Philippe, with furniture of a cold and cumbersome fashion, the coverings of which were being removed in my honor by a little maid of about sixteen years, with a slender figure but not much beauty.

Then the servants left me alone. I looked around the room with interest. On the walls hung three portraits, one was of the actress in a celebrated rôle, another was of the poet-lover, wearing a long frock-coat, tight at the waist, and the ruffled shirt of those days, and the third was of the musician, seated before a clavichord. The lady was blond and charming in her portrait, but her pose was a little affected, as was the fashion of that day. Her charming mouth and blue eyes smiled graciously; and the technique of the painting was of a high degree of excellence. Those three remarkable faces seemed to be looking already at the next generation, and their surround-

ings had an air of a day that was past and of individualities that were no more.

A door opened and a little woman entered. She was very old, very small, with white eyebrows and bands of white hair. Somehow she reminded me of a white mouse, quick and furtive in her movements. She gave me her hand, and, with a voice that was still fresh, vibrating, and sonorous, she said graciously: "Thank you, Monsieur. It is very kind of the men of to-day to remember the women of yesterday! Be seated."

I told her that her house had attracted me, that I had tried to learn the name of the proprietor, and, having learned it, I could not resist the desire to ring her bell.

"Your visit gives me the greater pleasure, Monsieur," she said, "as it is the first time such an event has happened. When your card was handed to me, with the gracious compliment it carried, I was as startled as if some one had announced an old friend who had been gone these twenty years. I am forgotten, truly forgotten, no one remembers me, no one will think of me until the day of my death; then, all the papers will talk for three days of Julie Romain, telling anecdotes, giving details, and souvenirs and scandals, and, perhaps, pompous eulogies. Then that will be the end of me!"

She was silent a moment and then resumed: "And that will not be long now. In a few months, in a few days, perhaps, the little woman who is now alive will be nothing but a corpse!"

She raised her eyes to her portrait, which met her gaze as if smiling at that withered caricature of

itself; then she looked at the two men, the scornful poet and the inspired musician, both of whom seemed to say: "What does that ruin ask of us?"

An indescribable, keen, irresistible sadness seized my heart, the sadness that overwhelms those whose lives are finished and who struggle still with memories as a drowning man struggles in deep water.

From the place where I sat I could see brilliant and swiftly moving carriages passing along the road, going from Nice to Monte Carlo. And seated inside were beautiful young women, rich and happy, and men, smiling and satisfied. She followed my glance, and, comprehending my thought, murmured with a resigned smile: "It is not possible to be and to have been at the same time."

"How beautiful life must have been for you!" I said.

She sighed deeply: "Yes, beautiful and sweet! It is for that reason that I regret it so much."

I saw that she was disposed to talk of herself; so, softly and with delicate precautions, as one would touch a painful wound, I began to question her. She spoke of her success, of her intoxicating joys, of her friends, of her whole triumphant existence.

"Your greatest joy and your deepest happiness—did you owe them to the theater, Madame?" I asked.

"Oh! no," she replied quickly.

I smiled and she added, raising her eyes, with a sad look, to the portraits of the two men:

"I owed my greatest happiness to them."

I could not refrain from asking her to which one she owed it.

"To both, Monsieur! I even confuse them in my

mind sometimes, and besides, I feel remorse toward one of them to this day."

"Then, Madame, it is not to them but to the act of love itself that you owe your gratitude. They have merely been love's instruments."

"That is possible. But, ah! what wonderful instruments!"

"Are you certain that you have not been loved—that you would not have been loved as well, and perhaps better, by a simple man, one who was not great, but who would have offered you his whole life, his whole heart, his whole being, every thought and every hour? With those two you had two formidable rivals—music and poetry."

She cried out with force, with that youthful voice, which could still thrill the soul: "No, Monsieur, no! A simpler man might have loved me better, perhaps, but he would not have loved me as those two did. Ah! but they knew how to sing the music of love, as no other man in the world could have sung it.

"How they intoxicated me! Is it possible that any other man could have found that which they found in words and in sounds? Is it enough to love, if one does not know how to put into love all the poetry and all the music of the sky and the earth? They knew, those two, how to make a woman ecstatic with joy with their songs and their words as well as with their deeds. Yes, there was perhaps more of illusion than reality in our passion; but those illusions lift you to the clouds, whereas realities, alone, always leave you on the earth. If others loved me more, it was through them alone that I learned, felt, and adored love!"

Suddenly she began to weep, noiselessly, tears of bitter sorrow. I appeared not to notice it and looked far away out of the window. After a few moments she went on:

"You see, Monsieur, with most people the heart grows old with the body. With me that has not happened. My poor body is sixty-nine years old, but my heart is only twenty. And that is the reason why I live all alone, with my flowers and my dreams."

Again a long silence fell between us. After a time she calmed herself, and again spoke smilingly:

"How you would laugh at me, Monsieur, if you knew how I pass my evenings when the weather is fine! I am ashamed of my folly and pity myself at the same time."

It was useless for me to beg of her to tell me; she would not do so; then I rose to go, at which she cried, "What! so soon?"

I told her that I had intended to dine at Monte Carlo, and at once she asked, a little timidly: "Would you not like to dine with me? It would give me very much pleasure."

I accepted her invitation immediately. She appeared delighted and rang the bell; then, when she had given a few orders to the little maid, she said she would like to show me her house.

A kind of glass-covered veranda, full of plants, opened from the dining-room, and permitted one to see, from one end to the other, the long alley of orange-trees, extending to the foot of the mountains. A low seat, hidden under the shrubbery, indicated that the aged actress often came to sit there.

Then we went into the garden to look at the flowers. Evening came on softly, one of those calm, warm evenings that bring forth all the perfumes of the earth. It was almost dark when we placed ourselves at the table. The dinner was excellent and we sat long over it. We became quite intimate friends. A profound sympathy for her had sprung up in my heart. She drank a glass of wine and became more friendly and confidential.

"Let us go out and look at the moon," she said at last. "I adore the moon, the lovely moon! It has been the witness of my greatest joys. It seems to me that all my sweetest memories are treasured there, and that I have only to look at it in order to have them come back to me. And sometimes, in the evening, I arrange for myself a pretty scene, so pretty —if you only knew! But no, you would laugh at me too much—I cannot tell you—I don't dare—no, — no, I cannot tell you!"

"Ah, Madame, continue, I pray!" I begged of her. "What is your little secret? Tell me! I promise you not to laugh—I swear it!"

She hesitated; I took her hands, her poor little hands, so thin and cold, and kissed them one after the other many times, as her lovers were wont to do in former days. She was moved, though she still hesitated.

"You promise me not to laugh?" she said timidly.

"Yes, I swear it, Madame!"

"Well, then, come!" she said with a smile.

We rose from the table, and as the awkward youth in green livery drew back the chair behind her, she spoke a few low, quick words in his ear.

He replied, respectfully, "Yes, Madame, immediately."

She took my arm and led me upon the veranda. The orange-tree walk was a beautiful sight. The moon cast a slender line of silver among the trees, — a long line of light that fell on the yellow sand between the dense and rounded branches. As the trees were in bloom, their delicious and penetrating perfume filled the air, and among the dark foliage were thousands of fireflies, whose tiny flames looked like the seed of stars.

"Oh, what an ideal environment for a scene of love!" I cried.

She smiled. "Is it not? Is it not? You will see presently!"

She made me sit down beside her, and murmured:

"The memory of such scenes is what makes me regret life. But you hardly dream of those things, you men of to-day. You are merely money-makers, traders, business men. You don't know how to talk to us even. When I say 'us,' I mean women who are young. Love affairs have become merely *liaisons,* which originate often in an unacknowledged bill of the dressmaker. If you find the bill more important than the woman, you disappear; but if you esteem the woman of greater value than the bill, you pay! Nice manners, and charming affections!"

She took my hand. "Look!" she said.

I was astonished and transported with pleasure at the charming picture that appeared. Below us, at the end of the alley and in the full moonlight, a youth and a maiden were coming toward us, clasping each other around the waist. They advanced, their

arms entwined, walking slowly in the moon's rays, the soft effulgence of which bathed them completely.

They disappeared in the darkness for a moment, then reappeared further down the avenue.

The youth was dressed in a white satin costume of the last century, with a broad hat, over which hung an ostrich feather. The maiden wore a skirt with wide hoops, and her head was dressed with the high, powdered coiffure affected by beautiful dames in the days of the Regency.

At last they came to a halt, about a hundred steps away from us, and, standing in the middle of the alley, they embraced, after saluting each other gracefully.

Suddenly I recognized the two little servants! Then I was seized with one of those irresistible desires to laugh that shake one all over. I did not laugh, however. I resisted the impulse, and waited to see the next scene in this extraordinary comedy.

The lovers now returned toward the end of the alley, and distance again made them appear charming. They withdrew farther and farther away, and at last disappeared like figures in a dream. The alley seemed lonely without them.

I took my departure also. I left immediately, so that I should not see them again; for I thought it probable that the spectacle was made to last a long time, in order to recall all the past,—that past of love and scenic effect; that fictitious past, deceiving and seductive, falsely yet truly charming,—to cause the tender heart to throb again in the romantic breast of the old actress, and to use me as a final instrument.

AN UNREASONABLE WOMAN

A GREAT wind was whistling outside, an autumn wind, groaning and galloping; one of those winds which kill the last leaves and carry them away to the clouds.

The hunters had finished their dinner and were still booted, red, animated, and lighted up. They were those demi-Norman lords, half country squire, half peasant, rich and vigorous, shaped for cutting the horns of beeves when they stopped them in the market.

They had hunted all day on Mr. Blondel's estate, Mr. Blondel, the mayor of Eparville, and they were eating now around the great table, in a kind of farm-villa of which their host was the proprietor.

They were talking like a whirlwind, laughing like a roar of wild animals, and drinking like cisterns, their legs stretched out, their elbows on the cloth, their eyes shining under the flame of the lamps, heated by a hearth fire so formidable as to send to the ceiling its ruddy glow. They chatted of hunting and dogs.

But they had come to the hour when other ideas come to men half tipsy, and all eyes followed the strong girl with plump cheeks who carried at the end of her red wrists great platters filled with food.

Suddenly a devil of a fellow, who had become a veterinary after having studied for a priest, and who looked after all the animals of the district, by name Sejour, said:

"My eyes! Monsieur Blondel, you have a girl there who is not starved."

And a laugh made the echoes ring. Then an old nobleman, declassed, ruined by alcohol, M. de Varnetot, raised his voice:

"I once had a droll adventure with a girl like that. Wait, I must tell it to you. Every time I think of her it recalls Mirza, my dog which I sold to Count d'Haussonnel and which returned every day when she was let out, because she was unable to leave me. Finally, I got angry and begged the Count to keep her chained. Do you know what the beast did? She died of grief.

"But, to return to my maid; here is the story:

"I was then twenty-five years old, and lived as a bachelor in my castle at Villebon. You know that when one is young and has an income, and makes a beast of himself every evening, he has his eye on all sides.

"I discovered a young girl who was in service at the house of Deboultot of Cauville. You know Deboultot well, you, Blondel. To be brief, she pleased me so much, the hussy, that I went one day to her master and made a business proposition to him. He gave me his servant and I sold him my black mare,

Cocotte, which he had sought of me for two years. He extended his hand to me and said: 'It is agreed, M. De Varnetot.' It was a bargain. The little one came to the castle and I took my black mare to Cauville myself, and I let him have for three hundred crowns.

"At first everything went as if on wheels. No one mistrusted anything. Only Rose loved me a little too much for my taste. The child, you see, was not a nobody. She had something out of the common in her veins. She came from some girl who committed some error with her master.

"Briefly, she adored me. There were cajolings, endearments, little pet names, and heaps of caresses —enough to make it a matter of reflection.

"I said to myself: 'This cannot last, or I would allow myself to be caught.' But they do not catch me easily. I am not one of those to be taken in with a couple of kisses. So, I had my eyes open when she announced to me that she was large.

"Pif! Paf! it was as if some one had put two shots from a gun into my breast. And she embraced me, she embraced me, I say, and laughed and danced as if she were mad. What! I said nothing the first day; but at night I reasoned with myself; I thought: 'It is just here; it is necessary to parry the blow and cut the thread; it is the only time.' You understand, I had my father and mother at Barneville, and my sister married to the Marquis of Yspare, at Rollebec, two leagues from Villebon. There must not be any stories.

"But how was I to draw myself out of the affair? If she left the house, something would be suspected

and people would talk. If I kept her there, the condition would soon be recognized, and then I could not turn her away.

"I spoke to my uncle about it, the Baron de Creteuil, an old buck who has known more than one such case, and asked his advice. He responded tranquilly:

"'You must marry, my boy.'

"I made a leap. 'Marry, uncle,' said I, 'marry whom?'

"He shrugged his shoulders gently as he replied:

"'Whom you wish; that is your affair, not mine. If one is not stupid there is always somebody to be found.'

"I reflected for two weeks upon this idea, and ended by saying to myself: 'My uncle is right.'

"Then I commenced to rack my brain to think of some one, when one evening the justice of the peace, with whom I was dining, said to me:

"'Mother Paumelle's son is into mischief again; it is true that a good dog shows his race.'

"This Mother Paumelle was a sly old gypsy of whom the youth could have all they desired. For six francs she would certainly have sold her soul, and her rake of a son followed in her footsteps.

"I went and found her, and very gently made her understand the state of affairs. As I was somewhat embarrassed in my explanations, she demanded, all at once:

"'Well, how much will you give to this little one?'

"She was malicious, this old woman, but as I was not stupid, I was prepared for business. I

owned three pieces of waste land beyond Sasseville, which belong to my three farms in Villebon. The farmers were always complaining that it was too far away; in short, I took back the three fields, six acres in all, and, as my farmers found fault, I returned to them, up to the end of each lease, all their rents in poultry. In this way the thing was settled. Then, having bought a piece on one side from my neighbor, M. Aumonte, I had a little house constructed down there, the whole thing for about fifteen hundred francs in all. In this way I had got together a little farm which had not cost me very much, that I could give to the little girl for a marriage portion.

"The old woman cried out: 'It is not enough; but I will wait; we will leave it without deciding anything.'

"The next day at daybreak the lad came to find me. I could scarcely recall his face, but when I saw him I was reassured; he was not bad for a peasant, but had the air of a rude fellow.

"He looked at the affair from a distance, as if he were buying a cow. When we had agreed, he wished to see the property, and we set out together over the fields. The scamp kept me going for three hours over the land; he surveyed it, measured it, took up the earth and crumbled it in his hands, as if he were afraid of being deceived in the merchandise. The house was not yet roofed; he exacted slate instead of thatch, because it needed less repairs! Then he said to me:

"'And the furniture; you must give that.'

"I protested: 'No. It is enough to give you a farm.'

"He sneered: 'Yes, a farm and a child.'

"I colored, in spite of myself. He went on:

"'Come, now, you must give a bed, a table, the chest of drawers, three chairs, and the kitchen dishes, or nothing can be done.'

"I consented to it.

"Then we started to return. He had not yet said a word about the girl. But suddenly, with a sly, constrained air, he asked:

"'But if she should die, who would it go to, this farm?'

"I answered: 'To you, naturally.'

"That was what he had wanted to know since morning. Immediately he extended his hand to me with a satisfied appearance. We were of one accord.

"Oh! but I had difficulty in making Rose consent. She dragged herself at my feet, sobbed, and kept repeating: 'It was you proposed it to me! It was you! it was you!' For more than a week she resisted in spite of my reasoning and my prayers. They are stupid, these women! As soon as they get love into their heads, they understand nothing else. Wisdom is nothing; it is love above all, and all for love!

"Finally, I got angry and threatened to throw her out. Then she yielded, little by little, on the condition that I would allow her to come and see me from time to time.

"I myself conducted her to the altar, paid for the ceremony, and gave the wedding dinner. I did the thing up grandly, in short. Then, 'Good-bye, my children!' I went to pass six months with my brother in Touraine.

"When I returned I learned that she had been at the house every week asking for me. And I had scarcely been home an hour before I saw her coming with a baby in her arms. Believe me if you will, but it affected me in some way to see this little monkey. I believe I even embraced it.

"As for the mother, she was a wreck, a skeleton, a shadow. She looked thin and old. Ye gods! it was evident this marriage was not to her liking. I said to her mechanically:

"'Are you happy?'

"'Then she began to weep like a fountain, and, with hiccoughs and sobs, she cried:

"'I can never, never leave you now. I would rather die; I cannot.'

"She made a devil of a noise. I consoled her as well as I could and conducted her back to the gate.

"I learned that her husband beat her, and that her mother-in-law made life hard for her, the old cabbage-head.

"Two days later she returned. She took me in her arms and dragged herself upon the earth. 'Kill me,' said she, 'but I will never go back down there.'

"This is exactly what Mirza would have said could she have spoken! These stories began to be very tiresome to me and I went away again for another six months.

"When I returned — when I returned, I learned that she had died three weeks before, having visited the castle every Sunday — just like Mirza. The child had also died eight days before.

"As for the husband, the cunning rascal, he inherited the property. He has turned out well since, it appears, and is now municipal counselor."

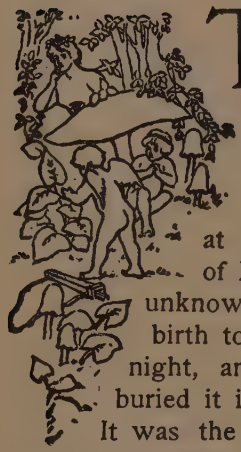
M. de Varnetot added, laughing:

"It is a fact that I made the fortune of that man!"

And M. Sejour, the veterinary, concluded gravely, carrying a glass of brandy to his lips:

"Say what you will, but with women like that, such things should not be."

ROSALIE PRUDENT



THERE was a mystery in that affair about Rosalie Prudent, which neither the jury, nor the judge, nor the prosecuting attorney of the republic himself could understand.

The girl Rosalie was a servant at the house of the Varambot family, of Mantes. She became *enceinte,* and, unknown to her employers, had given birth to a child in the garret, during the night, and had then killed the child and buried it in the garden.

It was the ordinary story of most of the infanticides committed by servants. But one act remained inexplicable. The examination of the girl's room had resulted in the discovery of a complete *layette* for an infant, made by Rosalie herself, who had passed her nights during three months in cutting out the garments and sewing them. The grocer where she had bought her candles (paid for out of her wages), in order to perform this long task, came forward and testified to the fact of their purchase. In addition it was

learned that the midwife of the town, informed by Rosalie of her condition, had given her all the advice and information necessary in case the child should be born at a time when aid was impossible to obtain. She had found a place also, at Poissy, for Rosalie Prudent, who foresaw her loss of situation, as the Varambots were severe on the subject of morality.

They appeared in court, the man and his wife, small provincials of moderate means, exasperated against the vulgar creature who had besmirched the immaculateness of their house. They would have liked to see her guillotined at once, without trial, and they overwhelmed her with insults which in their mouths became accusations.

The guilty one, a tall, handsome girl of lower Normandy, fairly well educated for her station, wept without ceasing, and made no reply to them or to anyone. The Court came to the conclusion that she had accomplished that act of barbarity in a moment of despair and insanity, since everything indicated that she had hoped to keep her infant and bring it up.

The judge tried once more to make her speak, to get her to acknowledge her crime, and having asked her with great kindness to do so, he made her understand at last that the jury sitting there to judge her did not wish her death, but were ready to pity her.

The girl appeared to be making up her mind to speak at last.

"Tell us now at first who is the father of that child," said the judge.

Until that moment she had refused obstinately to divulge this fact. Now she replied suddenly, looking

straight at her employers, who had come there in a rage to calumniate her.

"It is Monsieur Joseph, the nephew of Monsieur Varambot!"

Varambot and his wife started, and both cried at the same time:

"It is false! She lies! It is infamous!"

The judge bade them be silent, and said:

"Continue, I beg of you, and tell us how it happened."

Then the girl began to speak hurriedly, seeming to find some comfort for her poor, solitary, bruised heart in giving vent to her sorrow before these severe-looking men, whom she had taken until then for enemies and inflexible judges.

"Yes, it was Monsieur Joseph Varambot — it happened when he came for his vacation last summer."

"What is the occupation of this Monsieur Joseph Varambot?"

"He is underofficer in the artillery, Monsieur. He was two months at the house — two months of the summer. I wasn't thinking of anything when he began to look at me, and then to say things to me, and finally to make love to me the whole day long. I was easy, Monsieur! He told me I was a handsome girl, that I pleased him, that I was to his taste. For myself, he pleased me, to be sure. What would you have? Anyone listens to those things, when one is alone — as I am. I am alone on the earth, Monsieur. There is no one to whom I can talk — no one to whom I can tell my troubles. I have neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister — no one! He seemed like a brother who had come to me when

he began to talk to me. And then he asked me to go down to the river one evening, so that we might talk without making so much noise. And I went down there. Could I have known what would happen? He put his arms around my waist — of course I didn't want to, — no, no! I couldn't help it. I wanted to cry, the air was so soft and warm — it was clear moonlight — I couldn't help it! No, I swear it to you, I couldn't help it — he did what he pleased. That lasted three weeks, as long as he remained. I would have followed him to the end of the world. But he went away, and I didn't know that I was *enceinte* — I didn't! I didn't know it until the month afterward."

She began to weep so violently that they were obliged to give her time to compose herself. Then the judge spoke, in the tone of a father confessor: "Go on, my girl, go on."

She continued: "When I knew that I was *enceinte*, I told Madame Boudin, the midwife, to whom one can tell these things; and I asked her what to do in case that happened without her. And then I made the clothes, night after night, until one o'clock in the morning; and then I looked for another place, for I knew very well I should be discharged; but I wished to remain in that house until the end, in order to economize the pennies, seeing that I had no money and that I would need it for the little one."

"Then you did not wish to kill him?"

"Oh! surely not, Monsieur."

"Why did you kill him, then?"

"Here's how it happened. It came sooner than I thought it would. It took me in the kitchen as I

was washing my dishes. Monsieur and Madame Varambot had retired already, so I went upstairs without trouble, holding to the banisters. I lay down on the floor in my room, so as not to soil the bed. That lasted perhaps one hour—but it may have been two or three—I can't tell, so much pain did I have, —and then—and then it was over, and I took up my baby!

"Oh, yes! I was happy, for sure! I did everything that Madame Boudin told me, everything! Then I laid him on the bed,—and then another pain began, and it was a pain to kill anyone. If you knew what that was, you others, you wouldn't do as much, I'm sure! I fell on my knees, and then on my back on the floor, and then it began all over again, and that, too, lasted one hour, or perhaps two, and there I was all alone. Finally, there came another little one, yes, another, two of them, like that! I took it up, as I took the first one, and I put it on the bed by the side of the other. One—two! Can it be possible, I said? Two babies! And I, who earn twenty francs a month! Say—was it possible for me to take care of them? To care for one—yes, I might do that by depriving myself, but not two!

"The thought of that turned my head. What do I know about it, I? Could I choose, say? Do I know? I saw myself come to my last day! I couldn't keep two, so I put the pillow on them without knowing what I was doing—and I threw myself on the bed and upon them, too. And I stayed there, rolling and crying, until daylight, which I saw through the window. I looked at them—they were both

dead under the pillow, quite dead. Then I took them under my arm, I went down the stairs, and out in the garden; I took the gardener's spade and I buried them in the ground, as deep as I could, one here and the other there, not together, so that they could not talk of their mother, if they do talk, the little dead children. Do I know?

"And then I went back to my bed, and I was so sick that I could not get up. They made the doctor come, and he understood everything. That is the truth, Monsieur the judge. Do what you want to me. I am ready."

During her speech half of the jurymen had been wiping their eyes over and over again, trying to hide their emotion. All the women in the court room were sobbing.

"At what spot in the garden did you bury the other infant?" asked the judge.

"Which one did you find?" Rosalie inquired.

"The one that was under the artichokes."

"Ah! the other is buried under the strawberries beside the well!" The poor girl began again to sob so loud that it was enough to break one's heart to hear her. The jury acquitted her.

HIPPOLYTE'S CLAIM

THE fat Justice of the Peace, with one eye closed and the other half-open, is listening with evident displeasure to the plaintiffs. Once in a while he gives a sort of grunt that foretells his opinion, and in a thin voice resembling that of a child, he interrupts them to ask questions. He has just rendered judgment in the case of Monsieur Joly against Monsieur Petitpas, the contestants having come to court on account of the boundary of a field which had been accidentally over-stepped by Monsieur Petitpas's farmhand, while the latter was plowing.

Now he calls the case of Hippolyte Lacour, vestryman and ironmonger, against Madame Céleste Césarine Luneau, widow of Anthime Isidore Luneau.

Hippolyte Lacour is forty-five years old; he is tall and gaunt, with a clean-shaven face and long hair, and he speaks in a slow, singsong voice.

Madame Luneau appears to be about forty years of age. She is built like a prize-fighter, and her plain

dress is stretched tightly over her portly form. Her enormous hips hold up her overflowing bosom in front, while in the back they support the great rolls of flesh that cover her shoulders. Her face, with strongly-cut features, rests on a short, fat neck, and her strong voice is pitched at a key that makes the windows and the eardrums of her auditors vibrate. She is about to become a mother and her huge form protrudes like a mountain.

The witnesses for the defense are waiting to be called.

His Honor begins: Hippolyte Lacour, state your complaint.

The plaintiff speaks: Your Honor, it will be nine months on Saint-Michael's day that the defendant came to me one evening, after I had rung the Angelus, and began an explanation relating to her barrenness.

The Justice of the Peace: Kindly be more explicit.

Hippolyte: Very well, your Honor. Well, she wanted to have a child and desired my participation. I didn't raise any objection, and she promised to give me one hundred francs. The thing was all cut and dried, and now she refuses to acknowledge my claim, which I renew before your Honor.

The Justice: I don't understand in the least. You say that she wanted a child! What kind of child? Did she wish to adopt one?

Hippolyte: No, your Honor, she wanted a new one.

The Justice: What do you mean by a new one?

Hippolyte: I mean a newborn child, one that we were to beget as if we were man and wife.

The Justice: You astonish me. To what end did she make this abnormal proposition?

Hippolyte: Your Honor, at first I could not make out her reasons, and was taken a little aback. But as I don't do anything without thoroughly investigating beforehand, I called on her to explain matters to me, which she did. You see, her husband, Anthime Isidore, whom you knew as well as you know me, had died the week before, and his money reverted to his family. This greatly displeased her on account of the loss it meant, so she went to a lawyer who told her all about what might happen if a child should be born to her after ten months. I mean by this that if she gave birth to a child inside of the ten months following the death of Anthime Isidore, her offspring would be considered legitimate and would entitle her to the inheritance. She made up her mind at once to run the risk, and came to me after church, as I have already had the honor of telling you, seeing that I am the father of eight living children, the eldest of whom is a grocer in Caen, department of Calvados, and legitimately married to Victoire-Elisabeth Rabou—

The Justice: These details are superfluous. Go back to the subject.

Hippolyte: I am getting there, your Honor. So she said to me: "If you succeed, I'll give you one hundred francs as soon as I get the doctor's report." Well, your Honor, I made ready to give entire satisfaction, and after eight weeks or so I learned with pleasure that I had succeeded. But when I asked her for the hundred francs she refused to pay me. I renewed my demands several times, never getting so much as a pin. She even called me a liar and a

weakling, a libel which can be destroyed by glancing at her.

The Justice: Defendant, what have you to say?

Madame Luneau: Your Honor, I say that this man is a liar.

The Justice: How can you prove this assertion?

Madame Luneau [red in the face, choking and stammering]: How can I prove it? What proofs have I? I haven't a single real proof that the child isn't his. But, your Honor, it isn't his, I swear it on the head of my dead husband.

The Justice: Well, whose is it, then?

Madame Luneau [stammering with rage]: How do I know? How do—do I know? Everybody's I suppose. Here are my witnesses, your Honor, they're all here, the six of them. Now make them testify, make them testify. They'll tell—

The Justice: Collect yourself, Madame Luneau, collect yourself and reply calmly to my questions. What reasons have you to doubt that this man is the father of the child you are carrying?

Madame Luneau: What reasons? I have a hundred to one, a hundred? No, two hundred, five hundred, ten thousand, a million and more reasons to believe he isn't. After the proposal I made to him, with the promise of one hundred francs, didn't I learn that he wasn't the father of his own children, your Honor, not the father of one of 'em?

Hippolyte [calmly]: That's a lie.

Madame Luneau [exasperated]: A lie! A lie, is it? I guess his wife has been seen by everybody around here. Call my witnesses, your Honor, and make them testify?

Hippolyte [calmly]: It's a lie.

Madame Luneau: It's a lie, is it? How about the red-haired ones, then? I suppose they're yours, too?

The Justice: Kindly refrain from personal attacks, or I shall be obliged to call you to order.

Madame Luneau: Well, your Honor, I had my doubts about him, and said I to myself, two precautions are better than one, so I explained my position to Césaire Lepic, the witness who is present. Says he to me, "At your disposal, Madame Luneau," and he lent me his assistance in case Hippolyte should turn out to be unreliable. But as soon as the other witnesses heard that I wanted to make sure against any disappointment, I could have had more than a hundred, your Honor, if I had wanted them. That tall one over there, Lucas Chandelier, swore at the time that I oughtn't to give Hippolyte Lacour a cent, for he hadn't done more than the rest of them who had obliged me for nothing.

Hippolyte: What did you promise for? I expected the money, your Honor. No mistake with me,—a promise given, a promise kept.

Madame Luneau [beside herself]: "One hundred francs! One hundred francs! One hundred francs for that, you liar! The others there didn't ask a red cent! Look at 'em, all six of 'em! Make them testify, your Honor, they'll tell sure. [To Hippolyte.] Look at 'em, you liar! they're as good as you. They're only six, but I could have had one, two, three, five hundred of 'em for nothing, too, you robber!

Hippolyte: Well, even if you'd had a hundred thousand—

Madame Luneau: I could, if I'd wanted 'em.

Hippolyte: I did my duty, so it doesn't change matters.

Madame Luneau [slapping her protuberant form with both hands]: Then prove that it's you that did it, prove it, you robber! I defy you to prove it!

Hippolyte [calmly]: Maybe I didn't do any more than anybody else. But you promised me a hundred francs for it. What did you ask the others for, afterward? You had no right to. I guess I could have done it alone.

Madame Luneau: It is not true, robber! Call my witnesses, your Honor; they'll answer, sure.

The Justice called the witnesses in behalf of the defense. Six red, awkward individuals appeared.

The Justice: Lucas Chandelier, have you any reason to suppose that you are the father of the child Madame Luneau is carrying.

Lucas Chandelier: Yes, sir.

The Justice: Célestin-Pierre Sidoine, have you any reason to suppose that you are the father of the child Madame Luneau is carrying?

Célestin-Pierre Sidoine: Yes, sir.

The four other witnesses testified to the same effect.

The Justice, after a pause, pronounced judgment: Whereas the plaintiff has reasons to believe himself the father of the child which Madame Luneau desired, Lucas Chandelier, Célestin-Pierre Sidoine, and others, have similar, if not conclusive reasons to lay claim to the child.

But whereas Mme. Luneau had previously asked the assistance of Hippolyte Lacour for a duly stated consideration:

And whereas one may not question the absolute good faith of Hippolyte Lacour, though it is questionable whether he had a perfect right to enter into such an agreement, seeing that the plaintiff is married, and compelled by the law to remain faithful to his lawful spouse:

Therefore the Court condemns Madame Luneau to pay an indemnity of twenty-five francs to Hippolyte Lacour for loss of time and unjustifiable abduction.

BENOIST

IT ALL came over him one Sunday after mass. He went out of church and followed the crossroad that led to his house, when he found himself behind the Martin girl who was also returning home.

The father walked beside his daughter with the important step of a rich farmer. Disdaining the blouse, he wore a kind of waistcoat of gray cloth, and had on his head a melon-shaped hat with a wide brim. She, laced in a corset which she only wore once a week, walked very straight, her waist drawn in, her shoulders large, hips projecting, switching a little. Her hat was all flowers, the confection of an Yvetot milliner, and she showed her round, strong, supple neck, where little tendrils of hair were fluttering, moistened by the air and sun.

Benoist saw only her back; but he knew her face well, which was the reason he had noticed her still further. Suddenly he said to himself: "My! but she is pretty, just the same, that Martin girl!"

He looked at her as she walked along, admiring her crudely, and feeling himself moved with desire. He had no need of seeing her face, none at all. He planted his eyes upon her figure, repeating to himself, as if he were speaking: "She is a pretty girl!"

The Martin girl turned to the right to enter "Martinère," the farm of John Martin, her father. As she turned, she looked back and saw Benoist, who looked queer to her. She cried out: "Good morning, Benoist." He answered: "Good morning, Miss Martin, good morning, Mr. Martin," and passed on.

When he entered his house, the soup was on the table. He seated himself opposite his mother, beside the hired man and boy, while the maidservant went to draw the cider. He ate a few spoonfuls, then pushed his plate aside. His mother asked:

"What is the matter, don't you feel well?"

He answered: "No, I have something like a burning in my stomach and I have no appetite."

He watched the others eat, breaking off from time to time a mouthful of bread which he carried slowly to his lips and masticated a long time. He kept thinking of the Martin girl: "All the same, she is a pretty girl." And strange to say, he had never perceived it until this time, and now it had come to him so suddenly and so strongly that he was unable to eat any more. He scarcely touched the stew.

His mother said to him: "Come, now, Benoist, do eat a little; it is a side of mutton, and very good. When one has no appetite, it is well to force oneself a little sometimes."

He swallowed a mouthful, then pushed back his plate: "No, I cannot, decidedly."

Upon rising, he made a tour of the farm and gave the boy a half-holiday, promising to drive up the cattle in passing. The country was empty, it was a day of repose. From place to place, in a field of clover, the cows moved slowly, with bodies expanded, ruminating under the full sun. Some detached plows were standing in a corner of a plowed field; and the upturned earth, ready for the seed, displayed its large brown ridges in the midst of patches of yellow where bits of wheat and oat straw were left to decay after a late reaping.

An autumn wind, somewhat dry, was blowing over the plain, announcing a cool evening after sunset. Benoist sat down beside a ditch, put his hat on his knees as if he needed the air on his head, and said aloud, in the silence of the field: "When it comes to pretty girls, there is a pretty girl!"

He thought of her still in the evening in his bed, and again on waking the next day. He was not sad, he was not discontented; he could not have told what was the trouble with him. But there was something which held him, something that fastened to his soul, an idea which would not leave him and which made a kind of tickling in his heart.

Sometimes we find a large fly shut up in a room. We hear it flying around and buzzing until the noise possesses us, irritates us. Suddenly it stops; we forget about it; but again it starts, forcing our attention. We can neither catch it nor kill it nor make it stay in place. Finally, we resign ourselves to its humming. So the remembrance of the Martin girl agitated Benoist's mind; it was like an imprisoned fly.

Then a desire to see her again took possession of him, and he passed and repassed before the Martin farm. He saw her at last, hanging some linen upon a line between two apple-trees.

It was warm and she was only protected by a short skirt and a chemise, which showed to advantage the white arch made by her arms, as she pinned up the napkins. He lay flat beside the ditch for more than an hour after she had gone. He returned to find himself more haunted than before.

For a month his mind was full of her, so that he trembled when her name was mentioned before him. He could not eat, and had night sweats which hindered his sleeping. On Sunday, at mass, he could not keep his eyes away from her. She perceived it and smiled at him, flattered at being appreciated.

Then one evening, he suddenly met her in the road. She stopped on seeing him approach. He walked straight to her, suffocated by a fear that seized him, but resolved to speak to her. He commenced stammering:

"See here, Miss Martin, I can't endure this any longer."

And she answered him mockingly: "What is it that you cannot endure, Benoist?"

He replied: "That I think about you as long as there are hours in the day."

Placing her hands on her hips, she answered: "It is not I who force you to."

He murmured: "Yes, it is you; and I can neither sleep nor eat, nor rest, nor nothing."

Very low she said: "What do you think is necessary to cure you of it?"

He was struck dumb, his arms twitching, his eyes round, his mouth open. She struck him a sharp blow in the chest and ran away as fast as she could.

From this day they often met by the ditches or in the crossroad, generally at the close of day, when he was returning with his horses and she was driving the cows to the stable. He felt himself drawn, thrown toward her, by some great impulse of heart and body. He felt a desire to press her close, to strangle her, to eat her and make her a part of himself. And he had tremblings from powerlessness, from impatience, and rage, from the fact that she was not his complement, making together but one being.

There began to be gossip in the country. It was said they were promised to one another. Indeed, he had asked her if she would be his wife, and she had answered: "Yes." They were only waiting for an opportunity to speak of it to their parents.

Then, suddenly, she no longer came at certain hours to meet him. He could only get a glimpse of her at mass, on Sunday. And then, one Sunday, after the sermon, the curate announced from the high pulpit that there was a promise of marriage between Victoire Adelaide Martin and Joseph Isidore Vallin.

Benoist felt as if he had raised blood. His ears buzzed; he could no longer hear anything, and he perceived, after some time, that he was weeping into his prayer book.

For a month he kept his room. Then he began to work again. But he was not cured and still thought of her always. He shunned passing along

the roads that surrounded her dwelling, not wishing to see even the trees of her yard, and this forced him to make a large circuit morning and evening.

She was now married to Vallin, the richest farmer in the district. Benoist no longer spoke to him, although they had been comrades since infancy.

Then, one evening, as Benoist was passing across the common, he learned that she was *enceinte*. Instead of resenting this, or its affecting him with a great grief, he found in it a kind of solace. It was finished now, well finished. They were more separated by this than by marriage. Truly, it was best so.

Some months passed, and still some months. He saw her sometimes, walking to the village with slow step. She blushed on seeing him, lowered her head, and hastened her steps. And he turned out of his way in order not to cross her and look into her eyes.

But he thought, with the same terror as on that first morning, of finding himself face to face with her and obliged to speak to her. What could he say, after all he had said to her in former times holding her hands and kissing the locks about her cheeks? He still often thought of their meeting place by the side of the ditch. It was villainous to do as she did, after so many promises.

However, little by little, anger left his heart; there was no longer anything but sadness. And, one day, he took his old way by the farm where she lived. He saw the roof of the house from afar. She was in there! Living there with another! The apple-trees were in blossom, the fowls were singing about the

barnyard. The whole place seemed empty, the folk having gone to the fields for the spring work. He stopped near the fence and looked into the yard. The dog lay sleeping before his kennel. Three calves were walking slowly, one behind the other, toward the pool. A large turkey-cock was wheeling about before the door, parading before the poultry after the manner of a stage singer.

Benoist leaned against a post and suddenly felt himself seized with a desire to weep. But just then he heard a cry, a great, appealing cry coming from the house. He stood lost in amazement, his hands clinched upon the bars, ever listening. Another cry, prolonged, piercing, came to his ears, and entered his soul and his flesh. It was she who was in trouble! She!

Finally, he started hurriedly across the inclosure, pushed open the door and saw her stretched out upon the floor, in agony, her face livid, her eyes haggard, seized with the pains of childbirth.

He stood there, paler and trembling more than she, murmuring:

"I am here, my friend; here I am."

And she replied, in gasps: "Oh! do not leave me, Benoist, do not leave me!"

He looked at her, not knowing what to say or what to do. She began to cry out again: "Oh! oh! this tears me in two! Oh! Benoist!"

And she seemed frightfully tortured. Suddenly a furious desire to help her came over Benoist; he must appease her suffering, free her from this agony. He bent over and took her up and carried her to her bed. And, although she groaned continually, he then un-

dressed her, taking off her kerchief, her frock, and her skirt. She began to bite her hands in order not to cry out. Then he did for her as he was accustomed to do for beasts, cows, sheep, and mares: he aided her and received into his hands a large infant, which began to squall.

He wiped it and wrapped it in a cloth which was drying before the fire, then placed it on a pile of linen that lay on the table and returned to the mother. He put her on the floor again, changed the bed, and put her in it. She whispered: "Thanks, Benoist, you have a brave heart." And she wept a little, as if some regret had seized her.

As for him, he loved her no longer, not at all. It was finished. Why? How? He could not have told. What had come to pass had cured him better than ten years of absence.

She asked, weak and trembling: "What is it?"

He answered in a calm voice: "It is a girl, and a handsome one."

They were again silent. At the end of a few seconds, the mother, in a feeble voice, said: "Show her to me, Benoist."

He went and got the little one and was presenting it to her as if it were bread that had been blessed, when the door opened and Isidore Vallin appeared. He could not understand at first, then suddenly, he guessed it all.

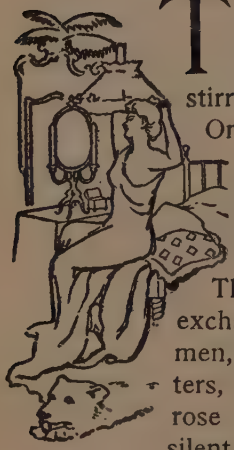
Benoist, somewhat disconcerted, murmured: "I was passing, I was just passing when I heard a cry —and I came —here is your child, Vallin!"

Then the husband, with tears in his eyes, took the frail little monkey that was held out to him, em-

braced it, and stood for some seconds overcome; then he placed the child on the bed and extended both hands to Benoist, saying: "Done now, Benoist; you see, between us all is said. If you wish, we shall from this time be friends; just that, a pair of friends—"

And Benoist replied: "I am willing, certainly—I am willing."

FECUNDITY



THEY were walking, these two old friends, in the garden all in blossom, where the gay springtime stirred with life.

One was a senator and the other a member of the French Academy, grave, both of them, full of reason and logic, but solemn,—people of mark and reputation.

They were speaking at first of politics, exchanging thoughts, not upon ideas but men, personalities, which in these matters, always precede reason. Then they rose to reminiscences, then they were silent, continuing to walk side by side, both softened by the sweetness of the air.

A great basket of radishes sent forth their odor, fresh and delicate. A heap of flowers, of every kind and color, threw their sweetness to the breeze, while a radiant ebony-tree full of yellow berries, scattered to the wind its fine powder, a golden smoke which reminded one of honey, and which carried, like the caressing powder of the perfumer, its embalmed seed across space.

The senator stopped, breathed in the fertile sweetness that was floating by him, looked at the blossoming tree, resplendent as a sun from which the pollen was now escaping. And he said:

"When one thinks that these imperceptible atoms, which smell good, can bring into existence in a hundred places, miles from here, plants of their own kind, can start the sap and fiber of the female trees, creating from a germ, as we mortals do, they seem mortal, and they will be replaced by other beings of the same essence, forever, like us!"

Then, planted before the radiant ebony-tree whose vivifying perfume permeated every breath of air, the senator added, as if addressing it:

"Ah! my jolly fellow, if you were to count your children you would be woefully embarrassed. And behold! here is one that accomplishes them easily, who lets himself go without remorse and disturbs himself little about it afterward."

The Academician replied: "We do as much, my friend."

The senator answered: "Yes, I do not deny that; we do forget ourselves sometimes, but we know it, at least, and that constitutes our superiority."

The other man shook his head: "No, that is not what I mean; you see, my dear, there is scarcely a man who does not possess some unknown children, those children labeled *of unknown father,* whom he has created, as this tree reproduces itself, almost unconsciously.

"If it became necessary to establish the count of the women we have had, we should be, should we not, as embarrassed as this ebony-tree, which you call upon to enumerate his descendants?

"From eighteen to forty, perhaps, bringing into line all our passing encounters and contacts of an hour, it can easily be admitted that we have had intimate relations with two or three hundred women. Ah, well! my friend, among this number are you sure that you have not made fruitful at least one, and that you have not, upon the streets or in prison, some blackguard son, who robs and assassinates honest people, that is to say, people like us? or perhaps a daughter, in some bad place? or perhaps, if she chanced to be abandoned by her mother, a cook in somebody's kitchen?

"Think further that nearly all women that we call 'public' possess one or two children whose father they do not know, children caught in the hazard of their embraces at ten or twenty francs. In every trade, there is profit and loss. These castaways constitute the 'loss' of their profession. Who were their generators? You — I — all of us, the men who are 'all right!' These are the results of our joyous dinners to friends, of our evenings of gaiety, of the hours when our flesh contents us and pushes us on to the completion of adventure.

"Robbers, rovers, all these miserable creatures, in short, are our children. And how much better that is for us than if we were theirs, for they reproduce also, these beggars!

"For my part, I have a villainous story upon my conscience, which I would like to tell you. It brings me incessant remorse, and more than that, continual doubt and an unappeasable uncertainty which at times tortures me horribly.

"At the age of twenty-five I had undertaken, with

one of my friends, now counselor of state, a journey through Brittany, on foot.

"After fifteen or twenty days of forced march, after having visited the coasts of the north, and a part of Finisterre, we arrived at Douarnenez; from there, in a day's march, we reached the wildest point of the Raz, by the bay of Trepasses, where we slept in some village whose name ends in *of*. When the morning came a strange fatigue held my comrade in bed. I say bed from habit, since our bed was composed simply of two boxes of straw.

"It was impossible to remain in such a place. I forced him to get up, and we came into Audierne toward four or five o'clock in the evening. The next day he was a little better. We set out again, but on the way he was taken with intolerable weariness, and it was with great difficulty that we were able to reach Pont-Labbe.

"There at least there was an inn. My friend went to bed, and the doctor, whom we called from Quimper, found a high fever without quite determining the nature of it.

"'Do you know Pont-Labbe? No.' Well, it is the most characteristic Breton town from Point Raz to Morbihan—a region which contains the essence of Breton morals, and legends, and costumes. To-day, even, this corner of the country has scarcely changed at all. I say 'to-day, even,' because I return there now every year, alas!

"An old castle bathes the foot of its towers in a dismal pond, sad with the call of wild birds. A river, deep enough for coasters, comes up to the town. In the streets, narrowed by the old houses, the men wear

great hats and embroidered waistcoats and the four coats, one above the other; the first, about the size of the hand, covers at least the shoulder blades, while the last stops just below the breeches.

"The girls, who are large, pretty, and fresh looking, wear a bodice of thick cloth which forms a breast-plate and corset, constraining and leaving scarcely a suspicion of their swelling, martyrized busts. Their headdresses are also of strange fashion: over the temples two embroidered bands in color frame the face, binding the hair which falls in a sheet behind the head and is mounted by a singular bonnet on the very summit, often of tissue of gold or silver.

"The servant at our inn was eighteen years old or more, with blue eyes, a pale blue which were pierced with the two little black dots of the pupils; and with teeth short and white, which she showed always in laughing and which seemed made for biting granite.

"She did not know a word of French, speaking only the Breton patois, as do most of her compatriots.

"Well, my friend was no better, and, although no malady declared itself, the doctor forbade his setting out, ordering complete rest. I spent the days near him, the little maid coming in frequently, bringing perhaps my dinner or some drink for him.

"I teased her a little, which seemed to amuse her, but we did not talk, naturally, since we could not understand each other.

"But one night, when I had remained near the sick man very late, I met, in going to my chamber, the girl entering hers. It was just opposite my open door. Then brusquely, without reflecting upon what

I was doing, and more in the way of a joke than anything, I seized her around the waist, and before she was over her astonishment I had taken her and shut her in my room. She looked at me, startled, excited, terrified, not daring to cry out for fear of scandal, and of being driven out by her master at first and her father afterward.

"I had done this in laughter; but when I saw her there, the desire to possess her carried me away. There was a long and silent struggle, a struggle of body against body after the fashion of athletes, with arms drawn, contracted, twisted, respiration short, skin moist with perspiration. Oh! she fought valiantly; and sometimes we would hit a piece of furniture, a partition, or a chair; then always clutching each other we would remain immovable for some seconds in the fear of some noise that would awaken some one; then we would commence again our exciting battle, I attacking, she resisting. Exhausted, finally, she fell; and I took her brutally, upon the ground, upon the floor.

"As soon as she was released, she ran to the door, drew the bolts, and fled. I scarcely met her for some days following. She would not allow me to approach her. Then, when my comrade was strong and we were to continue our journey, on the eve of our departure, she entered my apartment at midnight, barefooted, in her chemise, just as I was about to retire.

"She threw herself in my arms, drew me to her passionately, and, until daylight, embraced me, caressed me, weeping and sobbing, giving me all the assurances of tenderness and despair that a woman

can give when she does not know a word of our language.

"A week after this I had forgotten this adventure, so common and frequent when on a journey, the servants of the inns being generally destined to divert travelers thus.

"Thirty years passed without my thinking of, or returning to, Pont-Labbe. Then, in 1876, in the course of an excursion through Brittany, I happened to go there, as I was compiling a document which required statistics from the various parts of the country.

"Nothing seemed to have changed. The castle still soaked its gray walls in the pond at the entrance of the little town; the inn was there, too, although repaired, remodeled, with a modern air. On entering I was received by two young Bretons, of about eighteen, fresh and genteel, enlaced in their straight girdles of cloth, and encapped with silver embroidery over their ears.

"It was about six o'clock in the evening. I had sat down to dine when, the host coming to serve me himself, fatality, without doubt, led me to ask him: 'Did you know the former master of this house? I passed a fortnight here once, thirty years ago. I seem to be speaking to you from afar.'

"He answered: 'Those were my parents, sir.'

"Then I recounted the occasion of my stopping there, recalling my being detained by the illness of my comrade. He did not allow me to finish:

"'Oh! I remember that perfectly,' said he; 'I was fifteen or sixteen then. You slept in the room at the end of the hall and your friend in the one that is now mine, upon the street.'

"Then for the first time, a lively remembrance of the pretty maid comes back to me. I asked: 'You recall a genteel, pretty servant that your father had, who had, if I remember, sparkling eyes and fine teeth?'

"He replied: 'Yes, sir; she died in childbed some time after.'

"And, pointing toward the courtyard where a thin, lame man was taking out some manure, he added: 'That is her son.'

"I began to laugh. 'He is not beautiful, and does not resemble his mother at all. Takes after his father, no doubt.'

"The innkeeper replied: 'It may be; but they never knew who his father was. She died without telling, and no one here knew she had a lover. It was a famous surprise when we found it out. No one was willing to believe it.'

"A kind of disagreeable shiver went over me, one of those painful suggestions that touch the heart, like the approach of a heavy vexation. I looked at the man in the yard. He came now to draw some water for the horses and carried two pails, limping, making grievous effort with the limb that was shorter. He was ragged and hideously dirty, with long yellow hair, so matted that it hung in strings on his cheeks.

"The innkeeper added: 'He doesn't amount to anything, but is taken care of by charity in the house. Perhaps he would have turned out better if he had been brought up like anybody. But, you see how it is, sir? No father, no mother, no money! My parents took pity on him as a child, but after all—he was not theirs, you see.'

"I said nothing.

"I went to bed in my old room, and all night I could think of nothing but that frightful hostler, repeating to myself: 'What if that were my son! Could I have killed that girl and brought that creature into existence?'

"It was possible, surely. I resolved to speak to this man and to find out exactly the date of his birth. A difference of two months would arrest my doubts.

"I had him come to me the next day. But he could not speak French at all. He had the appearance of understanding nothing. Besides, he was absolutely ignorant of his age, which one of the maids asked him for me. And he held himself with the air of an idiot before me, rolling his cap in his knotty paws, laughing stupidly, with something of the old laugh of the mother in the corners of his mouth and eyes.

"But the host, becoming interested, went to look up his birth on the records. He entered into life eight months and twenty-six days after my departure from Pont-Labbe, because I recalled perfectly arriving at Lorient on the fifteenth of August. The record said: 'Father unknown.' The mother was called Jeanne Karradec.

"Then my heart began to beat with pressing blows. I could not speak, so suffocated did I feel. And I looked at that brute, whose long yellow hair seemed dirty and more tangled than that of beasts. And the beggar, constrained by my look, ceased to laugh, turned his head, and took himself off.

"Every day I would wander along the little river, sadly reflecting. But to what good? Nothing could

help me. For hours and hours I would weigh all the reasons, good and bad, for and against the chances of my paternity, placing myself in inextricable positions, only to return again to the horrible suspicion, then to the conviction, more atrocious still, that this man was my son.

"I could not dine and I retired to my room. It was a long time before I could sleep. Then sleep came, a sleep haunted with insupportable visions. I could see this ninny laughing in my face and calling me 'Papa.' Then he would change into a dog and bite me in the calf of my leg, in vain I tried to free myself, he would follow me always, and, in place of barking, he would speak, abusing me. Then he would go before my colleagues at the Academy, called together for the purpose of deciding whether I was his father. And one of them cried: 'It is indubitable! See how he resembles him!'

"And in fact, I perceived that the monster did resemble me. And I awoke with this idea planted in my brain, and with the foolish desire to see the man again and decide whether he did or did not have features in common with my own.

"I joined him as he was going to mass (it was on Sunday) and gave him a hundred sous, scanning his face anxiously. He began to laugh in ignoble fashion, took the money, then, again constrained by my eye, he fled, after having blurted out a word, almost inarticulate, which meant to say 'Thank you,' without doubt.

"That day passed for me in the same agony as the preceding. Toward evening I went to the proprietor and, with much caution, clothing of words,

finesse, and roundabout conversation, I told him that I had become interested in this poor being so abandoned by everybody and so deprived of everything, and that I wished to do something for him.

"The man replied: 'Oh, don't worry about him, sir. He wants nothing; you will only make trouble for yourself. I employ him to clean the stable, and it is all that he can do. For that, I feed him and he sleeps with the horses. He needs nothing more. If you have some old clothes, give them to him, but they will be in pieces in a week.'

"I did not insist, reserving my opinion.

"The beggar returned that evening, horribly drunk, almost setting fire to the house, striking one of the horses a blow with a pickax, and finally ended the score by going to sleep in the mud out in the rain, thanks to my generosity. They begged me, the next day, not to give him any more money. Liquor made him furious, and when he had two sous in his pocket he drank it. The innkeeper added: 'To give him money is the same as wishing to kill him.' This man had absolutely never had any money, save a few centimes thrown to him by travelers, and he knew no other destination for it but the alehouse.

"Then I passed some hours in my room with an open book which I made a semblance of reading, but without accomplishing anything except to look at this brute. My son! my son! I was trying to discover if he was anything like me. By force of searching I believed I recognized some similar lines in the brow and about the nose. And I was immediately convinced of a resemblance which only different clothing and the hideous mane of the man disguised.

"I could not stay there very long without becoming suspected, and I set out with breaking heart, after having left with the innkeeper some money to sweeten the existence of his valet.

"For six years I lived with this thought, this horrible uncertainty, this abominable doubt. And each year I condemned myself to the punishment of seeing this brute wallow in his filth, imagining that he resembles me, and of seeking, always in vain, to be helpful to him.

"And each year I come back more undecided, more tortured, more anxious. I have tried to have him instructed, but he is an idiot without resource. I have tried to render life less painful to him, but he is an irremediable drunkard and uses all the money that is given him for drink. And he knows very well how to sell his clothes and procure liquor.

"I have tried to arouse pity in his employer for him, that he might treat him more gently, offering him money always. The innkeeper, astonished, finally remarked very sagely: 'All this that you would like to do for him only ruins him. He must be kept like a prisoner. As soon as he has time given him or favors shown, he becomes unmanageable. If you wish to do good to abandoned children, choose one that will respond to your trouble.'

"What could I say to that?

"And if I should disclose a suspicion of the doubts which torture me, this creature would certainly turn rogue and exploit me, compromise me, ruin me. He would cry out to me 'Papa,' as in my dream.

"And I tell myself that I have killed the mother and ruined this atrophied being, larva of the stable,

hatched and bred of vileness, this man who, treated as others are, might have been like others.

"And you will not understand the sensation strange, confused, and intolerable, the fear I have in his presence, from thinking that this has come from me, that he belongs to me by that intimate bond which binds father to son, that, thanks to the terrible laws of heredity, he is a part of me in a thousand things, by his blood and his hair and his flesh, and that he has the same germs of sickness and the same ferments of passion.

"And I have ever an unappeasable need of seeing him, and the sight of him makes me suffer horribly; and from my window down there I look at him as he works in the dung-hill of the beasts, repeating to myself: 'That is my son!'

"And I feel, sometimes, an intolerable desire to embrace him. But I have never even touched his sordid hand."

The Academician was silent. And his companion, the political man, murmured: "Yes, indeed; we ought to occupy ourselves a little more with the children who have no father."

Then a breath of wind traversing the great tree shook its berries, and enveloped with a fine, odorous cloud the two old men, who took long draughts of the sweet perfume.

And the senator added: "It is good to be twenty-five years old, and it is even good to have children like that."

A WAY TO WEALTH

"Do you know what has become of Leremy?"

"He is captain of the Sixth Dragoons."

"And Pinson?"

"Subprefect."

"And Racollet?"

"Dead."

We hunted up other names which recalled to us young figures crowned with caps trimmed with gold braid. Later, we found some of these comrades, bearded, bald, married, the father of many children; and these meetings, these changes, gave us some disagreeable shivers, as they showed us how short life is, how quickly everything changes and passes away.

My friend asked: "And Patience, the great Patience?"

I roared.

"Oh! If you want to hear about him, listen to me: Four or five weeks ago, as traveling inspector at Limoges, I was awaiting the dinner hour. Seated before the *Grand Café* in Theater Square, I closed my

eyes, wearily. The tradesmen were coming in, in twos, or threes, or fours, taking their absinthe or vermouth, talking in a loud voice of their business and that of others, laughing violently, or lowering their voices when they communicated something important or delicate.

"I said to myself: 'What am I going to do after dinner?' And I thought of the long evening in this provincial town, of the slow, uninteresting walks through the unknown streets, of the overwhelming sadness which takes possession of the solitary traveler, of the people who pass, strangers in all things and through all things, the cut of their provincial coats, their hats, their trousers, their customs, local accent, their houses, shops, and carriages of singular shape. And then the ordinary sounds to which one is not accustomed; the harassing sadness which presses itself upon you little by little, until you feel as if you were lost in a dangerous country, which oppresses you and makes you wish yourself back at the hotel, the hideous hotel, where your room preserves a thousand suspicious odors, where the bed makes one hesitate, and the basin has a hair glued in the dirt at the bottom.

"I thought about all this as I watched them light the gas, feeling my isolated distress increase by the falling of the shadows. What was I going to do after dinner? I was alone, entirely alone, and lamentably lonesome.

"A big man came in, seated himself at a neighboring table, and commanded in a formidable voice:

"'Waiter, my bitters.'

"The 'my' in the phrase sounded like the report of a cannon. I understood immediately that everything

in existence was his, belonged to him and not to any other, that he had his character, and, by Jove! his appetite, his pantaloons, his no matter what, after his own fashion, absolute, and more complete than important. He looked about him with a satisfied air. They brought him his bitters and he called:

"'My paper.'

"I asked myself: 'Which is his paper, I wonder?' The name of that would certainly reveal to me his opinions, his theories, his hobbies, and his nature.

"The waiter brought the 'Times.' I was surprised. Why the 'Times,' a grave somber, doctrinal, heavy journal? I thought:

"'He is then a wise man, of serious ways, regular habits, in short, a good commoner.'

"He placed on his nose some gold eyeglasses, turned around and, before commencing to read, cast another glance all around the room. He noticed me and immediately began to look at me in a persistent, uneasy fashion. I was on the point of asking him the reason for his attention, when he cried out from where he sat:

"'By my pipe, if it is not Gontran Lardois!'

"I answered: 'Yes, sir, you have not deceived yourself.'

"Then he got up brusquely and came toward me with outstretched hands.

"'Ah! my old friend, how are you?' asked he.

"My greeting was constrained, not knowing him at all. Finally I stammered:

"'Why—very well—and you?'

"He began to laugh: 'It appears that you do not know me.'

"'No, not quite— It seems to me—however—'

"He tapped me on the shoulder:

"'There, there! Not to bother you any longer, I am Patience, Robert Patience, your chum, your comrade.'

"I recognized him. Yes, Robert Patience, my comrade at college. It was no other. I pressed the hand he extended to me and said:

"'Everything going well with you?'

"'With me? Like a charm.'

"His laugh rang with triumph. He inquired:

"'What has brought you here?'

"I explained to him that I was inspector of finances, making the rounds.

"He replied, observing my badge: 'Then you are successful?'

"I replied: 'Yes, rather; and you?'

"'Oh! I? Very, very!'

"'What are you doing now?'

"'I am in business.'

"'Then you are making money?'

"'Lots of it. I am rich. But, come to lunch with me to-morrow at noon, No. 17 Coq-qui-chante street; then you will see my place.'

"He appeared to hesitate a second, then continued:

"'You are still the good rounder of former times?'

"'Yes,—I hope so.'

"'Not married?'

"'No.'

"'So much the better. And you are still as fond of fun and potatoes?'

"I commenced to find him deplorably commonplace. I answered, nevertheless: 'Yes.'

"'And pretty girls?'

"'As to that, yes.'

"He began to laugh, with a good, hearty laugh:

"'So much the better, so much the better,' said he. 'You recall our first farce at Bordeaux, when we had supper at the Roupie coffeehouse? Ha! what a night!'

"I recalled that night, surely; and the memory of it amused me. Other facts were brought to mind, and still others. One would say:

"Do you remember the time we shut up the fawn in Father Latoque's cellar?'

"And he would laugh, striking his fist upon the table, repeating:

"'Yes — yes — yes — and you remember the mouth of the professor in geography, M. Marin, when we sent off a cracker on the map of the world just as he was orating on the principal volcanoes of the earth?'

"Then brusquely, I asked him:

"'And you, are you married?'

"He cried: 'For ten years, my dear fellow, and I have four children, most astonishing monkeys; but you will see them and their mother.'

"We were talking loud; the neighbors were looking around at us in astonishment. Suddenly my friend looked at his watch, a chronometer as large as a citron, and cried out:

"'Thunder! It is rude, but I shall have to leave you; I am not free this evening.'

"He rose, took both my hands and shook them as if he wished to break off my arms, and said:

"'To-morrow at noon, you remember?'

"'I remember.'

"I passed the morning at work at the house of the General-Treasurer. He wished to keep me for luncheon, but I told him that I had an appointment with a friend. He accompanied me out. I asked him:

"'Do you know where Coq-qui-chante street is?'

"He answered: 'Yes, it is five minutes from here. As I have nothing to do, I will conduct you there.'

"And we set out on the way. Soon, I noticed the street we sought. It was wide, pretty enough, at the border of the town and the country. I noticed the houses and perceived number 17. It was a kind of hotel with a garden at the back. The front, ornamented with frescoes in the Italian fashion, appeared to me in bad taste. There were goddesses hanging to urns, and others whose secret beauties a cloud concealed. Two stone Cupids held up the number.

"I said to the Treasurer: 'Here is where I am going.'

"And I extended my hand by way of leaving him. He made a brusque and singular gesture, but said nothing, pressing the hand I had held out to him. I rang. A maid appeared. I said:

"'M. Patience, if you please. Is he at home?'

"She replied: 'He is here, sir— Do you wish to speak with him?'

"'Yes.'

"The vestibule was ornamented with paintings from the brush of some local artist. Paul and Virginia were embracing under some palms drowned in a rosy light. A hideous Oriental lantern hung from the ceiling. There were many doors, masked by showy

hangings. But that which struck me particularly was the odor — a permeating, perfumed odor, recalling rice powder and the moldiness of cellars — an indefinable odor in a heavy atmosphere, as overwhelming as stifling, in which the human body becomes petrified. I ascended, behind the maid, a marble staircase which was covered by a carpet of some Oriental kind, and was led into a sumptuous drawing-room.

"Left alone, I looked about me.

"The room was richly furnished, but with the pretension of an ill-bred parvenu. The engravings of the last century were pretty enough, representing women with high, powdered hair and very low-cut bodices surprised by gallant gentlemen in interesting postures. Another lady was lying on a great bed, toying with her foot with a little dog drowned in draperies. Another resisted her lover complacently, whose hand was in a suspicious place. One design showed four feet whose bodies could be divined, although concealed behind a curtain. The vast room, surrounded by soft divans, was entirely impregnated with this enervating odor, which had already taken hold of me. There was something suspicious about these walls, these stuffs, this exaggerated luxury, in short, the whole place.

"I approached the window to look into the garden, of which I could see but the trees. It was large, shady, superb. A broad path was outlined on the turf, where a jet of water was playing in the air, brought in under some masonry some distance off. And suddenly three women appeared down there, at the end of the garden, between two shapely shrubs. They were walking slowly, taking hold of each other's

arms, clothed in long white dresses clouded with lace. Two of them were blonde and the other a brunette.

"They disappeared immediately among the trees. I remained transfixed, charmed, before this short but delightful apparition, which brought surging to my mind a whole poetic world. They were scarcely to be seen at all in that bower of leaves, at the end of the park, so secluded and delicious. I must have dreamed, and these were the beautiful ladies of the last century wandering under the elm-tree hedge, the ladies whose light loves the clever gravures on the walls recalled. And I thought of those happy times, flowery, incorporeal, tender, when customs were so sweet and lips so easy—

"A great voice behind me made me leap back into the room. Patience had come in, radiant, extending both his hands.

"He looked at me out of the end of his eyes with the sly air of some amorous confidence and, with a large, comprehensive gesture, a Napoleonic gesture, pointed out his sumptuous drawing-room, his park, with the three women passing again at the back, and, in a triumphant voice that sang of pride, said:

"'And when you think that I commenced with nothing—my wife and my sisters-in-law!'"

AM I INSANE?

Am I insane or jealous? I know not which, but I suffer horribly. I committed a crime it is true, but is not insane jealousy, betrayed love, and the terrible pain I endure enough to make anyone commit a crime, without actually being a criminal?

I have loved this woman to madness—and yet, is it true? Did I love her? No, no! She owned me body and soul, I was her plaything, she ruled me by her smile, her look, the divine form of her body. It was all those things that I loved, but the woman contained in that body, I despise her; hate her. I always have hated her, for she is but an impure, perfidious creature, in whom there was no soul; even less than that, she is but a mass of soft flesh in which dwells infamy!

The first few months of our union were deliciously strange. Her eyes were three different colors. No, I am not insane, I swear they were. They were gray at noon, shaded green at twilight, and blue at sun-

rise. In moments of love they were blue; the pupils dilated and nervous. Her lips trembled and often the tip of her pink tongue could be seen, as that of a reptile ready to hiss. When she raised her heavy lids and I saw that ardent look, I shuddered, not only for the unceasing desire to possess her, but for the desire to kill this beast.

When she walked across the room each step resounded in my heart. When she disrobed and emerged infamous but radiant from the white mass of linen and lace, a sudden weakness seized me, my limbs gave way beneath me, and my chest heaved; I was faint, coward that I was!

Each morning when she awakened I waited for that first look, my heart filled with rage, hatred, and disdain for this beast whose slave I was; but when she fixed those limpid blue eyes on me, that languishing look showing traces of lassitude, it was like a burning, unquenchable fire within me, inciting me to passion.

When she opened her eyes that day I saw a dull, indifferent look; a look devoid of desire, and I knew then she was tired of me. I saw it, knew it, felt right away that it was all over, and each hour and minute proved to me that I was right. When I beckoned her with my arms and lips she shrank from me.

"Leave me alone," she said. "You are horrid!"

Then I became suspicious, insanely jealous; but I am not insane, no indeed! I watched her slyly; not that she had betrayed me, but she was so cold that I knew another would soon take my place.

At times she would say:

"Men disgust me!" Alas! it was too true.

Then I became jealous of her indifference, of her thoughts, which I knew to be impure, and when she awakened sometimes with that same look of lassitude I suffocated with anger, and an irresistible desire to choke her and make her confess the shameful secrets of her heart took hold of me.

Am I insane? No.

One night I saw that she was happy. I felt, in fact I was convinced, that a new passion ruled her. As of old, her eyes shone, she was feverish and her whole self fluttered with love.

I feigned ignorance, but I watched her closely. I discovered nothing however. I waited a week, a month, almost a year. She was radiantly, ideally happy; as if soothed by some ephemeral caress.

At last I guessed. No, I am not insane, I swear I am not. How can I explain this inconceivable, horrible thing? How can I make myself understood? This is how I guessed.

She came in one night from a long ride on horseback and sank exhausted in a seat facing me. An unnatural flush tinted her cheeks and her eyes,—those eyes that I knew so well,—had such a look in them. I was not mistaken, I had seen her look like that; she loved! But whom? What? I almost lost my head, and so as not to look at her I turned to the window. A valet was leading her horse to the stable and she stood and watched him disappear; then she fell asleep almost immediately. I thought and thought all night. My mind wandered through mysteries too deep to conceive. Who can fathom the perversity and strange caprices of a sensual woman?

Every morning she rode madly through hills and dales and each time she came back languid; exhausted. At last I understood. It was of the horse I was jealous—of the wind which caressed her face, of the drooping leaves and of the dewdrops, of the saddle which carried her! It was all those things which made her so happy and brought her back to me satiated; exhausted! I resolved to be revenged. I became very attentive. Every time she came back from her ride I helped her down and the horse made a vicious rush at me. She would pat him on the neck, kiss his quivering nostrils, without even wiping her lips. I watched my chance.

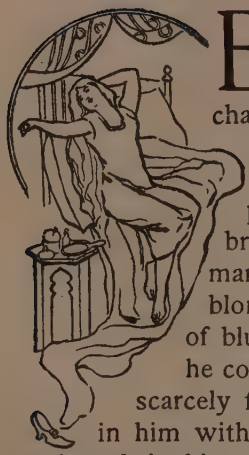
One morning I got up before dawn and went to the path in the woods she loved so well. I carried a rope with me, and my pistols were hidden in my breast as if I were going to fight a duel. I drew the rope across the path, tying it to a tree on each side, and hid myself in the grass. Presently I heard her horse's hoofs, then I saw her coming at a furious pace; her cheeks flushed, an insane look in her eyes. She seemed enraptured; transported into another sphere.

As the animal approached the rope he struck it with his fore feet and fell. Before she had struck the ground I caught her in my arms and helped her to her feet. I then approached the horse, put my pistol close to his ear, and shot him—as I would a man.

She turned on me and dealt me two terrific blows across the face with her riding-whip which felled me, and as she rushed at me again, I shot her!

Tell me, Am I insane?

FORBIDDEN FRUIT



BEFORE marriage they had loved each other chastely, in the starlight. At first there was a charming meeting on the shore of the ocean. He found her delicious, the rosy young girl who passed him with her bright umbrellas and fresh costumes on the marine background. He loved this blond, fragile creature in her setting of blue waves and immense skies. And he confounded the tenderness which this scarcely fledged woman caused to be born in him with the vague and powerful emotion awakened in his soul, in his heart, and in his veins by the lively salt air and the great seascape full of sun and waves.

She loved him because he paid her attention, because he was young and rich enough, genteel and delicate. She loved him because it is natural for young ladies to love young men who say tender words to them.

Then, for three months they lived side by side, eye to eye, and hand to hand. The greeting which they exchanged in the morning, before the bath, in the freshness of the new day, and the adieu of the evening, upon the sand, under the stars, in the warmth of the calm night, murmured low and still lower, had already the taste of kisses, although their lips had never met.

They dreamed of each other as soon as they were asleep, thought of each other as soon as they awoke, and, without yet saying so, called for and desired each other with their whole soul and body.

After marriage they adored each other above everything on earth. It was at first a kind of sensual, indefatigable rage; then an exalted tenderness made of palpable poesy, of caresses already refined, and of inventions both genteel and ungenteel. All their looks signified something impure, and all their gestures recalled to them the ardent intimacy of the night.

Now, without confessing it, without realizing it, perhaps, they commenced to weary of one another. They loved each other, it is true; but there was nothing more to reveal, nothing more to do that had not often been done, nothing more to learn from each other, not even a new word of love, an unforeseen motion, or an intonation, which sometimes is more expressive than a known word too often repeated.

They forced themselves, however, to relight the flame, enfeebled from the first embraces. They invented some new and tender artifice each day, some simple or complicated ruse, in the vain attempt to

renew in their hearts the unappeasable ardor of the first days, and in their veins the flame of the nuptial month.

From time to time, by dint of whipping their desire, they again found an hour of factitious excitement which was immediately followed by a disgusting lassitude.

They tried moonlight walks under the leaves in the sweetness of the night, the poesy of the cliffs bathed in mist, the excitement of public festivals.

Then, one morning, Henrietta said to Paul:

"Will you take me to dine at an inn?"

"Why, yes, my dearie."

"In a very well-known inn?"

"Yes."

He looked at her, questioning with his eye, understanding well that she had something in mind which she had not spoken.

She continued: "You know, an inn — how shall I explain it? — in a gallant inn, where people make appointments to meet each other?"

He smiled: "Yes. I understand, a private room in a large *café?*"

"That is it. But in a large *café* where you are known, where you have already taken supper — no, dinner — that is — I mean — I want — no, I do not dare say it!"

"Speak out, *chérie;* between us what can it matter? We are not like those who have little secrets from each other."

"No, I dare not."

"Oh! come, now! Don't be so innocent. Say it."

"Well — oh! well — I wish — I wish to be taken for your mistress — and that the waiters, who do not know that you are married, may look upon me as your mistress, and you too — that for an hour, you believe me your mistress, in that very place where you have remembrances of— That's all! And I myself will believe that I am your mistress — I want to commit a great sin — to deceive you — with yourself — there! It is very bad, but that is what I want to do — Do not make me blush — I feel that I am blushing — imagine — my wanting to take the trouble to dine with you in a place not quite the thing — in a private room where people devote themselves to love every evening — every evening — It is very bad — I am as red as a peony! Don't look at me!"

He laughed, very much amused, and responded:

"Yes, we will go, this evening, to a very *chic* place where I am known."

Toward seven o'clock they mounted the staircase of a large *café* on the Boulevard, he, smiling, with the air of a conqueror, she, timid, veiled, but delighted. When they were in a little room, furnished with four armchairs and a large sofa covered with red velvet, the steward, in black clothes, entered and presented the bill of fare. Paul passed it to his wife.

"What do you wish to eat?" said he.

"I don't know; what do they have that is good here?"

Then he read off the list of dishes while taking off his overcoat, which he handed to a waiter. Then he said:

"Serve this *menu:* Bisque soup — deviled chicken

—sides of hare—duck, American style,—vegetable salad, and dessert. We will drink champagne."

The steward smiled and looked at the young lady. He took the card, murmuring: "Will M. Paul have a cordial or some champagne?"

"Champagne, very dry."

Henrietta was happy to find that this man knew her husband's name. They sat down side by side upon the sofa and began to eat.

Ten candles lighted the room, reflected in a great mirror, mutilated by the thousands of names traced on it with a diamond, making on the clear crystal a kind of huge cobweb.

Henrietta drank glass after glass to animate her, although she felt giddy from the first one. Paul, excited by certain memories, kissed his wife's hand repeatedly. Her eyes were brilliant.

She felt strangely moved by this suspicious situation; she was excited and happy, although she felt a little defiled. Two grave waiters, mute, accustomed to seeing everything and forgetting all, entered only when it was necessary, and going out in the moments of overflow, going and coming quickly and softly.

Toward the middle of the dinner, Henrietta was tipsy, completely tipsy, and Paul, in his gaiety, pressed her knee with all his force. She prattled now, boldly, her cheeks red, her look lively and dizzy.

"Oh! come, Paul," she said, "confess now, won't you; I want to know all."

"What do you mean, *chérie?*"

"I dare not say it."

"But you must always—"

"Have you had mistresses — many of them — before me?"

He hesitated, a little perplexed, not knowing whether he ought to conceal his good fortunes or boast of them.

She continued: "Oh! I beg you to tell me, have you had many?"

"Why, some."

"How many?"

"I don't know. How can one know such things?"

"You cannot count them?"

"Why, no!"

"Oh! then you have had very many?"

"Yes."

"How many, do you suppose — somewhere near —"

"I don't know at all, my dear. Some years I had many and some only a few."

"How many a year, should you say?"

"Sometimes twenty or thirty, sometimes four or five only."

"Oh! that makes more than a hundred women in all."

"Yes, somewhere near."

"Oh! how disgusting!"

"Why disgusting?"

"Because it is disgusting — when one thinks of all those women — bare — and always — always the same thing — Oh! it is disgusting all the same — more than a hundred women."

He was shocked that she thought it disgusting, and responded with that superior air which men as-

sume to make women understand that they have said something foolish:

"Well, that is curious! If it is disgusting to have a hundred women, it is equally disgusting to have one."

"Oh, no, not at all!"

"Why not?"

"Because with one woman there is intrigue, there is a love that attaches you to her, while with a hundred women there is filthiness, misconduct. I cannot understand how a man can meddle with all those girls who are so foul—"

"No, they are very neat."

"One cannot be neat carrying on a trade like that."

"On the contrary, it is because of their trade that they are neat."

"Oh! pshaw! when one thinks of the night they pass with others! It is ignoble!"

"It is no more ignoble than drinking from a glass from which I know not who drank this morning, and that has been less thoroughly washed—you may be certain of it—"

"Oh! be still, you are revolting."

"But why ask me then if I have had mistresses?"

"Then tell me, were your mistresses all girls, all of them—the whole hundred?"

"Why, no—no—"

"Who were they, then?"

"Some were actresses—some little working girls—and some—women of the world—"

"How many of them were women of the world?"

"Six."

"Only six?"

"Yes."

"Were they pretty?"

"Yes, of course."

"Prettier than the girls?"

"No."

"Which did you prefer, girls or women of the world?"

"Girls."

"Oh! how filthy! Why?"

"Because I do not care much for amateur talent."

"Oh! horror! You are abominable, do you know it? But tell me, is it very amusing to pass from one to another like that?"

"Yes, rather."

"Very?"

"Very."

"What is there amusing about it? Is it because they do not resemble each other?"

"They do not."

"Ah! the women do not resemble each other."

"Not at all."

"In nothing?"

"In nothing."

"That is strange! In what respect do they differ?"

"In every respect."

"In body?"

"Yes, in body."

"In the whole body?"

"Yes, in the whole body."

"And in what else?"

"Why, in the manner of—of embracing, of speaking, of saying the least thing."

"Ah! and it is very amusing, this changing?"

"Yes."

"And are men different too?"

"That I do not know."

"You do not know?"

"No."

"They must be different."

"Yes, without doubt."

She remained pensive, her glass of champagne in her hand. It was full and she drank it at a draught; then, placing the glass upon the table, she threw both arms around her husband's neck, and murmured in his mouth:

"Oh! my dear, how I love you!" He seized her in a passionate embrace—

A waiter who was entering, drew back, closing the door; and the service was interrupted for about five minutes.

When the steward again appeared, with a grave, dignified air, bringing in the fruits for the dessert, she was holding another glassful between her fingers and, looking to the bottom of the yellow, transparent liquid, as if to see there things unknown and dreamed of, she murmured, with a thoughtful voice:

"Oh! yes! It must be very amusing, all the same!"

THE CHARM DISPELLED

The boat was filled with people. As the passage promised to be good, many people of Havre were making a trip to Trouville.

They loosed the moorings, a last whistle announced the departure, and immediately the entire body of the vessel shook, while a sound of stirring water was heard all along the sides. The wheels turned for some seconds, stopped, and then started gently. The captain, upon his bridge, having cried, "Go ahead!" through the tube which extends into the depths of the machinery, they now began to beat the waves with great rapidity.

We passed along the pier, covered with people. Some that were on the boat waved their handkerchiefs, as if they were setting out for America, and the friends who remained behind responded in the same fashion.

The great July sun fell upon the red umbrellas, the bright costumes, the joyous faces, and upon the ocean, scarcely moved by any undulations. As soon as they

had left the port, the little vessel made a sharp turn, pointing its nose directly for the far-off coast rising to meet the foam.

On our left was the mouth of the Seine, more than twelve miles wide. Here and there great buoys pointed out banks of sand, and one could see at a distance the fresh, muddy water of the river, which had not yet mingled with the salt brine, outlined in broad, yellow stripes upon the immense, pure green sheet of the open sea.

As soon as I boarded the boat I felt the need of walking up and down, like a sailor on his watch. Why? That I cannot say. But I began to circulate among the crowd of passengers on deck.

Suddenly some one called my name. I turned around. It was Henry Sidonie, whom I had not seen for ten years.

After we had shaken hands we resumed the walk of a bear in his cage which I had been taking alone, while we talked of people and things. And we looked at the two lines of travelers seated on both sides of the boat, chatting all the while.

All at once, Sidonie exclaimed, with a veritable expression of rage: "It is crowded with English here! Nasty people!"

The boat was full of English, in fact. Men standing about scanned the horizon with an important air which seemed to say: "It is the English who are masters of the sea! Boom! boom! here we are!"

And the white veils upon their white hats had the air of flags in their self-sufficiency.

The thin young girls, whose boots recalled the naval constructions of their country, wrapping their

straight figures and thin arms in multicolored shawls, smiled vaguely at the radiant landscape. Their little heads, perched on the top of their long bodies, wearing the peculiarly shaped English hat, were finished, at the back of the neck, by their thin hair, coiled around to resemble sleeping adders.

And the old spinsters, still more lank, opening to the wind their national jaw, appeared to threaten space with their enormous yellow teeth. In passing near them, one smells an odor of caoutchouc or some kind of dentifrice.

Sidonie repeated, with an increasing anger:

"Nasty people! Why couldn't they be hindered from coming to France?"

I inquired, laughingly: "Why, what do you care? As for me, I am perfectly indifferent to them."

He answered: "Yes, you are, indeed! But I—I married an Englishwoman. And there you have it!"

I stopped and laughed in his face. "The devil!" said I; "tell me about it. Has she made you so unhappy?"

He shrugged his shoulders, as he replied: "No, not precisely."

"Then she—she has—deceived you?"

"Unfortunately, no. That would give me a cause for divorce, and I should be free."

"But I do not understand."

"You do not understand? That is not astonishing. Well, she simply learned the French language, nothing more! Listen:

"I had never had the least desire to marry when I went to pass the summer at Etretat, two years ago. But there is nothing more dangerous than watering-

places. One cannot imagine to what an advantage young girls are seen there. Paris may be for women, but the country is for young girls.

"The idiotic promenades, the morning baths, lunches upon the grass, all are so many snares for marriage. And, truly, there is nothing prettier than a girl of eighteen running across a field or picking flowers along the road.

"I made the acquaintance of an English family living at the same hotel as myself. The father resembled the men you see there, and the mother all other Englishwomen. They had two sons, boys, all bones, who played at violent games, with balls, sticks, or rackets, from morning until evening; then, two girls, the elder a lean, well-preserved Englishwoman of maturity, the younger a wonder. She was a blonde, or rather a blondine, with a head that came from the skies. When they do undertake to be pretty, these wretches, they are divine. She had blue eyes, of the blue which seems to contain all the poetry, dreams, hopes, and happiness of the world!

"What a horizon of infinite thought opens before you in the two eyes of a woman like that! How well she responds to the eternal, vague expectation of our hearts!

"It is only necessary to remember that Frenchmen always adore foreigners. As soon as we meet a Russian, an Italian, a Swede, a Spanish, or an Englishwoman at all pretty, we fall in love with her immediately. Everything that comes from abroad fills us with enthusiasm, whether it be trouser cloth, hats, gloves, guns, or — women. We are wrong, neverthe less.

"But I believe the most seductive thing about these exotics is their faulty pronunciation of our language. As soon as a woman speaks French badly, she is charming. If she uses a wrong word, she is exquisite, and if she jabbers in a manner quite unintelligible, she becomes irresistible.

"You cannot imagine how pretty it is to hear a sweet, red mouth say: *'J'aime beaucoup la gigotte'* (I like mutton so much!).

"My little English Kate spoke a most unlikely tongue. I could understand nothing of it in the first days, she invented so many unheard-of words. That was when I became absolutely in love with the comical, gay little monkey. All these crippled, strange, ridiculous terms took on a delicious charm upon her lips; and, on the Casino terrace, in the evening, we had many long conversations, resembling spoken enigmas.

"I married her! I loved her foolishly, as one can love a dream. For the true lover adores naught but a dream which takes the shape of a woman. You recall Louis Bouilhet's admirable verse:

> "'You only were, in those rarest days,
> A common instrument under my art;
> Like the bow, on the *viol d'amour* it plays,
> I dreamed my dream o'er your empty heart.'

"Well, my dear, the greatest mistake I made was to give my wife a teacher of French. As long as she made a martyr of the dictionary and punished the grammar, I was fond of her. Our talks were very simple. She showed a surprising grace of mind, an incomparable elegance in her actions. She seemed to

be a marvelous speaking jewel, a doll of flesh made to kiss, knowing how to make known, or at least indicate the things she desired, uttering at times the strangest exclamations, and expressing rather complicated sensations and emotions in a coquettish fashion, with a force as incomprehensible as it was unforeseen. She much resembled those pretty playthings which say 'papa' and 'mamma,' pronouncing them 'Baba' and 'Bamban.'

"Could I have believed that—

"She speaks now—she speaks—badly—very badly— She makes just as many mistakes—but I can understand her—yes, I understand—I know—and I know her—

"I have opened my doll to see what was inside. I have seen. And one must talk, my dear!

"Ah! you don't know, you could never imagine the theories, the ideas, the opinions of a young Englishwoman, well brought up, in whom there is nothing to reproach, who repeats to me morning and evening all the phrases in the dictionary of conversation in use at the schools for young people.

"You have seen those favors for a cotillon, those pretty gilt-paper-covered execrable bonbons? I had one of them. I tore it open. I wished to taste what was inside, and became so disgusted that now there is a rebellion in my feelings if I but see one of her compatriots.

"I have married a paroquet to whom an old-time instructress had taught French. Do you understand?"

The port of Trouville now showed its wooden piers, covered with people. I said:

"Where is your wife?"

He answered: "I have just taken her back to Etretat."

"And where are you going?"

"I? I am going to try and divert myself at Trouville."

Then, after a silence, he added: "You cannot imagine how irksome a wife can become sometimes."

MADAME PARISSE

I was seated on the mole of the little port of Obernon, near the hamlet of La Salis, watching Antibes in the setting sun. I have never seen anything so wonderfully beautiful. The little town, inclosed within its heavy fortifications of masonry (constructed by Monsieur de Vauban), was situated in the middle of the Gulf of Nice. The great waves rolled in from afar to throw themselves at its feet, surrounding it with a garland of foam; and, above the ramparts, the houses could be seen, climbing one above another up to the two towers pointing to the sky like two horns on an ancient helmet, and standing out against the milky whiteness of the Alps—an enormous, illimitable wall of snow that appeared to shut off the entire horizon. Between the white foam at the foot of the walls and the white snow on the border of the sky, the little city, sparkling and upright on the blue background of the nearest mountains, shone in the rays of the setting sun, looking like a pyramid of red-roofed houses, the *façades* of

which were white, yet of such different shades of white that they seemed to be of many hues.

The sky above the Alps was of a pale blue that was almost white, as if the snow had given to it some of its own frosty whiteness. A few silvery clouds floated near the pale summit; and, on the other side of the gulf, Nice lay on the edge of the water like a white ribbon between the sea and the mountains. Two great lateen sails, forced onward by a strong breeze, appeared to run before the waves. I gazed at the scene, enchanted with its beauty. It was one of those sights so charming, so rare, so exquisite, which seem to take possession of you, and become one of those moments never to be forgotten, like certain happy memories. We think, we enjoy, we suffer, we are moved, from various causes, but we love by seeing! He that can feel deep emotion through the power of sight experiences the same keen joy, refined and profound, felt by the man with a sensitive and nervous ear when listening to music that stirs the heart.

I said to my companion, Monsieur Martini, a pure-blooded southerner, "That is certainly one of the rarest spectacles that it ever has been my good fortune to admire. I have seen Mont-Saint-Michel, that enormous jewel of granite, spring forth from the sands at sunrise. I have seen, in the Sahara, Lake Raianecherqui, fifty kilometers in length, shine under a moon as brilliant as our sun, and exhale toward the clouds a vapor as white as milk. I have seen in the Lipari Islands the fantastic sulphur crater of Volcanello, a giant flower, the center of which is a volcano that smokes and burns with a limitless

yellow flame that spreads out over the ocean. But I have seen nothing more impressive than Antibes, standing before the Alps in the setting sun. And I cannot tell why, at this moment, souvenirs of olden days haunt me. Verses of Homer come into my mind. It is a city of the old Orient, Antibes, it is a city of the 'Odyssey,' it is a western Troy—even though Troy was far from the sea."

Monsieur Martini drew from his pocket a Sarty guide, and read:

"The city was originally a colony founded by the Phœnicians of Marseilles, about the year 340 B.C. It received from them the Greek name of Antipolis, that is to say, 'city over against,' 'city in front of another,' because, in reality, it was situated opposite Nice, another colony of Marseilles. After the conquest of the Gauls, the Romans made of Antibes a municipal city, and her inhabitants enjoyed the privileges of a Roman city."

"We know," he continued, "by an epigram of Martial, that in his time—"

I interrupted him, saying: "I don't care what it was! I tell you I have before my eyes a city of the 'Odyssey.' Coast of Asia or coast of Europe—they are alike; and there is nothing on the other shore of the Mediterranean that awakens in me the memory of heroic days as does this."

The sound of an approaching step caused me to turn my head; a tall, dark woman was passing along the road that follows the sea in the direction of the cape.

Monsieur Martini murmured, emphasizing the last words: "It is Madame Parisse—you know!"

No, I did not know, but this name thrown out, the name of the shepherd of Troy, confirmed me in my dream.

I said, however, "Who is this Madame Parisse?"

He appeared surprised that I did not know her story. I reaffirmed that I did not know it, and I looked at the woman, who went on without seeing us, dreaming, walking with a slow, stately step, like the dames of antiquity, without doubt. She was about thirty-five years old, and beautiful yet, very beautiful, though perhaps a trifle too plump.

After she had passed out of sight, Monsieur Martini told me this story.

"Madame Parisse, a Mademoiselle Combelombe, had married, a year before the war of 1870, Monsieur Parisse, an employee of the government. She was then a beautiful young girl, as slender and gay as she has since become stout and sad. She had accepted Monsieur Parisse reluctantly; he was one of those little red-tape men, with short legs, who make a great fuss in a pint measure, which is yet too large for them.

"After the war, Antibes was occupied by a single battalion of line commanded by Monsieur Jean de Carmelin, a young officer who had been decorated during the campaign, and had only recently received the four stripes. As he was greatly bored with the life in that fortress, in that suffocating mole-hill shut in by enormous double walls, the commander went quite often for a walk on the Cape, a sort of park or forest, where there was a fine, fresh breeze.

"There he met Madame Parisse, who used also to come on summer evenings to breathe the fresh air under the trees. How was it that they loved? Can one tell? They met, they looked at each other, and when

they could not meet, they thought of each other, without doubt. The image of the young woman with the brown eyes, black hair, and pale face, the image of that fresh and beautiful southern girl, who showed her pretty white teeth in smiling, remained floating before the eyes of the officer, who would continue his promenade lost in thought, biting his cigar instead of smoking it. And the image of the commander in his close-fitting coat and red trousers, covered with gold lace, whose blond mustache curled on his lip, must have remained before the eyes of Madame Parisse when her husband, unshaved, badly dressed, short of limb, and with pursy stomach, returned home for supper.

"From meeting so often, they smiled at seeing each other, perhaps; and from that they came to think they knew each other. He bowed to her, certainly. She was surprised, and inclined her head slightly, only just enough to escape being impolite. But at the end of two weeks she returned his salutations from afar, before coming face to face.

"He talked to her! Of what? Of the setting sun, without any doubt! And they admired it together, looking deep into each other's eyes more often than at the horizon. And every day during two weeks there was some simple pretext for a little chat of several minutes. Then they dared to take a few steps together in talking of something or other; but their eyes spoke of a thousand things more intimate, of secret and charming things, the reflection of which in the softness and emotion of a look causes the heart to beat, because they reveal the soul better than words. Then he must have taken her hand and

murmured those words which a woman divines without appearing to have heard them.

"It was admitted between them that they loved, without submitting their mutual knowledge to the proof of sensuality or passion. She would have been content to remain indefinitely at the stage of romantic tenderness, but not he—he wished to go further. And he pressed her, every day more ardently, to give herself entirely to him. She resisted, did not wish it, and even seemed resolved never to yield.

"One evening, however, she said to him, as if by chance: 'My husband has just gone to Marseilles, and is going to remain there four days.'

"Jean de Carmelin threw himself at her feet, begging her to open her door that very evening near eleven o'clock. But she would not listen to him, and returned home as if angry. The commandant was in a bad humor all the evening; and the next day beginning at daybreak he walked on the ramparts in a rage, going from the drum-school to the platoon-school, and meting out reprimands to officers and men like one throwing stones into a crowd. But on returning for breakfast, he found under his napkin a note containing these four words: 'This evening, ten o'clock.' And he gave five francs, without any apparent reason, to the boy who served him.

"The day seemed long. He passed a part of it in prinking and perfuming himself. At the moment when he placed himself at the table for dinner, another envelope was handed to him. He found inside this telegram:

"'My darling, business terminated. I return this evening: train at nine. PARISSE.'

"The commandant gave vent to an oath so violent that the boy let the soup-tureen fall on the floor. What should he do? Certainly, he wanted her, and that very night, too, let it cost what it might, and he would have her. He would have her by some means or another, if he had to arrest and imprison her husband. Suddenly an insane idea crossed his mind. He called for paper and wrote:

"'MADAME: He will not return this evening. I swear it to you, and I will be at ten o'clock at the place you know. Fear nothing, I guarantee everything on my honor as an officer.

"'JEAN DE CARMELIN.'

"And, having sent this letter, he dined tranquilly. About eight o'clock he summoned Captain Gribois, who was next in command, and said to him, while rolling between his fingers the rumpled dispatch of Monsieur Parisse: 'Captain, I have received a telegram of a singular character, which it is impossible for me to communicate to you. You must go immediately and guard the gates of the city, in such a way that no one—you understand, no one—either comes in or goes out before six o'clock to-morrow morning. You must place guards in the streets also, and compel the inhabitants to go into their houses at nine o'clock. Anyone who is found outside after that hour will be conducted to his domicile *manu militari*. If your men meet me during the night they must retire at once with an air of not recognizing me. Do you understand me thoroughly?'

"'Yes, commandant.'

"'I make you responsible for the execution of these orders, captain.'

"'Yes, commandant.'

"'Would you like a glass of Chartreuse?'

"'With pleasure, commandant.'

"They touched glasses, drank the yellow liquor, and Captain Gribois departed.

"The train from Marseilles came into the station at exactly at nine o'clock, and left on the platform two travelers, then went on its way toward Nice.

"One of the travelers was tall and thin. He was a Monsieur Saribe, merchant in oils. The other passenger was short and stout,—it was Monsieur Parisse. They started on their way together, their traveling bags in their hands, to reach the town, a kilometer distant. But on arriving at the gate the sentinels crossed their bayonets and ordered them off.

"Alarmed, amazed, and filled with astonishment they drew aside and deliberated; then, after taking counsel together, they returned with precaution to parley, and to make known their names. But the soldiers must have received peremptory orders, for they threatened to shoot, and the two travelers, greatly frightened, took flight at the top of their speed, leaving behind them their bags, which impeded their flight.

"The two unfortunate travelers made the circle of the ramparts and presented themselves at the Porte de Cannes. This also was closed and guarded as well by a menacing sentinel. Messieurs Saribe and Parisse, like prudent men, insisted no longer, but returned to the station to find a shelter, for the road around the fortifications was not very safe after sunset.

"The employee at the station, surprised and sleepy, gave them permission to remain until daylight in the

waiting-room. They sat there, without light, side by side, on the green velvet-covered bench, too frightened to think of sleeping. The night was long for them.

"Toward half past six they learned that the gates were open and that one could at last enter Antibes. They started for the town, but did not find their bags along the way. When they had passed through the gates, still a little uneasy, the Commandant de Carmelin, with a sly look and his head in the air, came himself to meet and question them. He bowed to them politely, and made excuses for having caused them to pass a bad night, but said he had been obliged to execute orders.

"The people of Antibes were mystified. Some talked of a surprise meditated by the Italians; others of the landing of the imperial prince; and still others imagined an Orléanist plot. The truth was not guessed until later, when they learned that the battalion of the commandant had been sent far away, and that Monsieur de Carmelin had been severely punished."

Monsieur Martini ceased speaking, and soon after Madame Parisse reappeared, her walk being finished. She passed sedately near me, her eyes on the Alps, the summits of which were ruddy with the last rays of the setting sun.

I desired to salute her, that poor, saddened woman who must think always of that one night of love now so far in the past, and of the bold man who had dared, for a kiss from her, to put a whole city in a state of siege and compromise his future. To-day he had probably forgotten her, unless sometimes, after

drinking, he relates that audacious farce, so comic and so tender.

Had she ever seen him again? Did she love him still? And I thought: Here, indeed, is a trait of modern love, grotesque and yet heroic. The Homer who will sing of this Helen, and of the adventures of her Menelaus, must have the soul of a Merimée. And yet, the captain, this lover of that deserted woman, was valiant, bold, beautiful, strong as Achilles, and more cunning than Ulysses.

MAKING A CONVERT

WHEN Sabot entered the Martinville inn, they all laughed in advance. This rascal of a Sabot, how farcical he was! See how he disliked curates, for example! Ah! yes, yes! He was ready to eat them, this merry fellow.

Sabot (Théodule), master carpenter, represented the progressive party at Martinville. He was a tall, thin man, with gray, cunning eyes, hair glued to his temples, and thin lips. When he said: "Our holy father, the priest," in a certain fashion, everybody was convulsed. He made it a point to work on Sunday during mass. Every year he would kill his pig on Monday of Holy Week in order to have blood pudding until Easter, and when he passed the curate he would always say, in the way of a joke:

"Here's a man who finds his good God upon the roof."

The priest, a large man, very tall also, dreaded him because of his talk, which made partisans. Father Maritime was a politic man, a friend of ease. The struggle between them had gone on for ten years, a secret struggle, provoking and incessant. Sabot was municipal counselor. It was believed that he would be mayor, which would be decidedly bad for the church.

The elections were about to take place. The religious camp in Martinville trembled. Then, one morning the curate set out for Rouen, announcing to his servant that he was going to see the Archbishop.

Two days later he returned. He had a joyous, triumphant air. The next day everybody knew that the choir of the church was to be remodeled. A sum of six hundred francs had been given by Monseigneur from his private cashbox.

All the old pine stalls were to be removed and be replaced by new ones of heart of oak. It was a considerable piece of carpenter work, and they were talking about it in every house that evening.

Théodule Sabot did not laugh. The next day, when he went through the village, his neighbors, friends, and enemies said to him in a joking manner:

"Is it you who is to make over the choir of the church?"

He found nothing to answer, but he raged, and raged silently. The rogues would add:

"It is a good job; not less than two or three hundred clear profit."

Two days later it was known that the repairs had been given to Celestin Chambrelan, the carpenter of Percheville. Then the news was contradicted; then

it was said that all the benches of the church were also to be renewed. This would be worth two thousand francs, as some one had found out from the administration. The excitement was great.

Théodule Sabot was not asleep. Never, within the memory of man had a carpenter of the country executed a like piece of work. Then a rumor was heard that the curate was desolate at having to give this work to an out-of-town workman, but that Sabot's opinions were so opposed to his that it was impossible to give it to him.

Sabot knew it. He betook himself to the priest's house at nightfall. The servant told him that the curate was in the church. He went there. Two Ladies of the Virgin, sourish old maids, were decorating the altar for the month of Mary under the direction of the priest. There he was, in the middle of the choir, swelling out his enormous front, as he directed the work of the two women who, mounted on chairs, disposed of bouquets about the tabernacle.

Sabot felt under restraint in there, as if he were on the enemy's ground, but the desire of gain was ever pricking at his heart. He approached, cap in hand, without even noticing the Ladies of the Virgin, who remained standing, stupefied and immovable upon the chairs. He stammered:

"Good evening, Mr. Curate."

The priest responded without looking at him, all occupied with the altar:

"Good evening, Mr. Carpenter.

Sabot, out of his element, could say nothing further. After a silence, he said, however, "You are going to make some repairs?"

Father Maritime answered: "Yes, we are approaching the month of Mary."

Sabot repeated: "That's it, that's it," and then he was silent.

He felt now like withdrawing without saying anything more, but a glance of the eye around the choir restrained him. He perceived that there were sixteen stalls to be made, six to the right, and eight to the left, the door of the sacristy occupying two places more. Sixteen stalls in oak would be worth three hundred francs, and, in round numbers, there ought to be two hundred francs' profit on the work if it was managed well. Then he stammered:

"I—I've come for the work."

The curate appeared surprised. He asked:

"What work?"

"The work of the repairs," murmured Sabot, desperately.

Then the priest turned toward him and, looking him straight in the eye, said: "And you speak to me of working on the choir stalls of my church!"

The tone of Father Maritime's voice caused a cold chill to run down the back of Théodule Sabot, and gave him a furious desire to scamper away. Nevertheless, he responded with humility:

"Why, yes, Mr. Curate."

Then the priest folded his arms across his ample front, and, as if powerless from surprise, replied:

"You—you—you—Sabot, come to ask that from me— You—the only impious soul in my parish! Why, it would be a scandal, a public scandal. The Archbishop would reprimand me and send me to another place, perhaps."

He breathed hard for some seconds, then in a calmer tone he continued:

"I understand that it would be hard for you to see a work of so much importance go to a carpenter in a neighboring parish. But I could not do otherwise, at least not unless—no—it is impossible. You would never consent—and without that—never."

Sabot regarded critically the line of benches that came almost up to the door of the sacristy. Christopher! if one might be able to make this alteration! And he asked: "What is it you consider necessary? Say it."

The priest, in a firm tone, replied: "It would be necessary for me to have a statement of your goodwill."

Sabot murmured: "I should say nothing—I should say nothing—that would be understood."

The curate declared: "It would be necessary to take public communion at high mass, next Sunday—"

The carpenter grew pale and, without answering, asked:

"And the church benches, are they going to be replaced with new ones too?"

The priest responded with assurance: "Yes, but that will come later."

Sabot repeated: "I would say nothing, I say nothing. In fact, I feel nothing derogatory to religion, and I believe in it certainly; what ruffles me is the practice of it, but in this case, I should not show myself contrary."

The Ladies of the Virgin, having got down from their chairs, concealed themselves behind the altar; they were listening, pale with emotion.

The curate, seeing himself victorious, suddenly became friendly and familiar: "Well and good! well and good!" said he. "You have spoken wisely instead of being foolish, you understand. We shall see. We shall see."

Jabot smiled in a constrained way as he asked: "Isn't there some way of giving this communion the slip?"

The priest, with severe countenance, replied:

"At the moment that this work is given to you, I wish to be certain of your conversion." Then he continued more gently: "You will come to confess to-morrow; for it will be necessary for me to examine you at least twice."

Jabot repeated: "At least twice?"

"Yes."

The priest smiled: "You understand that it will be necessary to have a general clearing out, a complete clearing. I shall expect you then, to-morrow."

The carpenter, much moved, asked: "Where do you do this?"

"Why, in the confessional."

"In—that box there—in the corner? That is—scarcely—big enough for me, your box."

"Why so?"

"Seeing that—seeing that I am not accustomed to it. And seeing that I'm a little hard of hearing."

The curate showed himself lenient: "Ah! well, you can come to my house, in my dining-room. There we shall be all alone, face to face. How will that suit you?"

"That's it. That suits me, but your box, no."

"Well, to-morrow then, after the day's work, at six o'clock."

"It is understood, all plain and agreed upon; till to-morrow, then, Mr. Curate, and the rack for him who retracts."

And he extended his great rude hand, into which the priest let fall his own, heartily. The smack of this hand-shake ran along under the arches and died away back in the organ pipes.

Théodule Sabot was not tranquil while he was at work the next day. The apprehension he felt was something like what one feels when he is going to have a tooth pulled. Every moment this thought would come to him: "I must go to confession this evening." And his troubled soul, the soul of an atheist not wholly convinced, became excited from the confused and powerful fear of some divine mystery.

He directed his steps toward the rectory, when he had finished his day's work. The curate was waiting for him in the garden, reading his breviary as he walked up and down a narrow path. He seemed radiant, and said with a great laugh:

"Ah! well! here you are! Come in, come in, Mr. Sabot, nobody is going to eat you."

And Sabot passed in first. He stammered:

"If you are not too busy I should be pleased to finish up our little business, right away."

The curate answered: "At your service. I will get my surplice. One minute and I will listen to you."

The carpenter, so disturbed that he no longer had two ideas, watched him cover himself with the white

garment with its pressed folds. The priest made a sign to him.

"Put your knees on this cushion."

Sabot remained standing, ashamed to have to kneel. He muttered:

"What's the use?"

But the priest became majestic: "One can only approach the tribunal of penitence on the knees."

And Sabot kneeled.

The priest said: "Recite the 'Confiteor.'"

Sabot asked: "What's that?"

"The 'Confiteor.' If you do not know it, repeat one by one, after me, the words I pronounce."

And the curate articulated the sacred prayer, in a deliberate voice, scanning the words for the carpenter to repeat; then he said:

"Now, confess."

But Sabot said nothing more, not knowing how to commence.

Then Father Maritime came to his aid:

"My child, I will ask you some questions until you become a little more familiar with the customs. We will take up, one by one, the commandments of God. Listen to me and be not troubled. Speak very frankly, and never fear to say too much.

> "'One God alone you shall adore
> And you shall love him perfectly.'

Have you ever loved some one or something more than God? Do you love Him with all your soul, with all your heart, and all the energy of your love?"

Sabot was sweating from the effort of his thought. Finally he said:

"No. Oh! no, Mr. Curate. I love the good God as much as I can. That is — yes — I love Him well. To say that I love Him better than my children, no, I cannot. To say that, if it was necessary to choose between Him and my children, I would choose the good God, that I could not. To say that I would be willing to lose a hundred francs for the love of the good God, no, I could not. But I love Him well, be sure, I love Him well, all the same."

The priest, very grave, declared: "It is necessary that you love Him before anything."

And Sabot, full of good-will, answered: "I will do my best, Mr. Curate."

Father Maritime continued: "God will not have you take His name in vain. Have you sometimes made use of an oath?"

"No. Oh! no, indeed! I never swear. Sometimes, in a moment of anger, I speak the sacred name of God. That's all. I do not swear."

The priest cried: "But that is swearing." And then gravely: "Do it no more. I will continue: You will remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. What do you do on Sunday?"

This time Sabot scratched his ear. Finally he said: "I serve the good God in my own way, Mr. Curate. I serve Him — at home. I work on Sunday —"

The curate was magnanimous in interrupting him: "I know you will be more proper in the future. I pass the commandments following, sure that you have not failed in the first two. Let us see the sixth and the ninth. I repeat: 'The goods of another thou shalt not take, nor retain them knowingly.' Have

you turned to your own use by any means, the goods belonging to another?"

Théodule Sabot answered indignantly: "No! Ah! no! I am an honest man, Mr. Curate. I swear to that. Not to say that I have not sometimes counted more hours of work than I have done — I have sometimes done that. And I could not say that I have not put a few more centimes on notes, only a few, sometimes. But as for robbing, no, no, indeed, no!"

The curate answered severely: "Take not a single centime, for that is robbery. Do it no more. 'False witness shalt thou not bear, nor lie about anything.' Have you lied?"

"No, not that. I am no liar. I am not that kind. If you ask if I have not told some stories for the sake of talking, I could not deny it. And to say that I had not made people believe what was not so, when it was for my interest to do so, I could not. But as for lies, I tell no lies."

The priest simply said: "Be a little more careful." Then he pronounced:

"'Things of the flesh thou shalt not desire, except in marriage alone.'

"Have you desired or possessed another woman than your own?"

Sabot exclaimed with sincerity: "Oh! no. As for that, no, Mr. Curate. Deceive my poor wife? No! no! Not as much as the end of your finger. Not in thought, say nothing of action! That's true."

He was silent for some seconds, then, very low, as if some doubt had come over him, he said: "When I go to town, to say that I never go into a house, you know, one of the houses of license, for

the sake of a bit of laughter and frolic and see another kind of skin, that I could not say — but I always pay, Mr. Curate, I always pay; but I won't embarrass you with this that you have neither seen nor known."

The curate did not insist, but gave the absolution.

Théodule Sabot executed the work of the choir stalls, and received the sacrament in the months following.

A LITTLE WALK

WHEN father Leras, bookkeeper with Messrs. Labuze and Company, went out of the store, he stood for some minutes dazzled by the brilliancy of the setting sun.

He had toiled all day under the yellow light of the gas jet, at the end of the rear shop, on the court which was as narrow and deep as a well. The little room in which for forty years he had spent his days was so dark that even in the middle of summer they could hardly dispense with the gas from eleven to three o'clock.

It was always cold and damp there; and the emanations from that sort of hole on which the window looked came into the gloomy room, filling it with an odor moldy and sewer-like.

Monsieur Leras, for forty years, arrived at eight o'clock in the morning at this prison; and he remained till seven at night bent over his books, writing with the faithfulness of a good employee.

He now earned three thousand francs per year, having begun with fifteen hundred francs. He had

remained unmarried, his means not permitting him to take a wife. And never having enjoyed anything he did not desire much. From time to time, nevertheless, weary of his monotonous and continuous work, he made a Platonic vow:

"Cristi, if I had five thousand livres income I would enjoy life!"

He never had enjoyed life, never having had more than his monthly salary.

His existence passed without events, without emotion, and almost without hopes. The faculty of dreaming, which everyone has in him, had never developed in the mediocrity of his ambitions.

He had entered the employ of Messrs. Labuze and Company at twenty-one years of age. And he had never left it.

In 1856 he had lost his father, then his mother in 1859. And since then he had experienced nothing but a removal, his landlord having wanted to raise his rent.

Every day his morning alarm exactly at six o'clock made him jump out of bed by its fearful racket.

Twice, however, this machine had run down, in 1866 and in 1874, without his ever knowing why.

He dressed, made his bed, swept his room, dusted his armchair and the top of his commode. All these duties required an hour and a half.

Then he went out, bought a roll at the Lahure bakery, which had had a dozen different proprietors without losing its name, and he set out for the office eating the bread on the way.

His whole existence was thus accomplished in the narrow dark office, which was adorned with the same

wall-paper. He had entered the employ young, an assistant to Monsieur Burment and with the desire of taking his place.

He had taken his place and expected nothing further.

All that harvest of memories which other men make during their lives, the unforeseen events, the sweet or tragic love affairs, the adventurous journeys, all the hazards of a free existence, had been strange to him.

The days, the weeks, the months, the seasons, the years were all alike. At the same hour every day he rose, left the house, arrived at the office, took his luncheon, went away, dined, and retired without ever having interrupted the monotony of the same acts, the same deeds, and the same thoughts.

Formerly he looked at his blond mustache and curly hair in the little round glass left by his predecessor. He now looked every morning, before going out, at his white mustache and his bald head in the same glass. Forty years had flown, long and rapid, empty as a day of sorrow and like the long hours of a bad night—forty years, of which nothing remained, not even a memory, not even a misfortune, since the death of his parents, nothing.

That day Monsieur Leras stood dazzled at the street door by the brilliancy of the setting sun; and instead of returning to his house he had the idea of taking a little walk before dinner, something which he did four or five times a year.

He reached the Boulevard, where many people were passing under the budding trees. It was an

evening in springtime, one of those first soft warm evenings which stir the heart with the intoxication of life.

M. Leras walked along with his mincing old man's step, with a gaiety in his eye, happy with the unusual joy and the mildness of the air.

He reached the Champs-Elysées and proceeded, reanimated by the odors of youth which filled the breeze.

The whole sky glowed; and the Triumphal Arch stood with its dark mass against the shining horizon like a giant struggling in a conflagration. When he had nearly reached the stupendous monument the old bookkeeper felt hungry and went into a wine-shop to dine.

They served him in front of the shop, on the sidewalk, a sheep's foot stew, a salad, and some asparagus, and Monsieur Leras made the best dinner he had made in a long while. He washed down his Brie cheese with a small bottle of good Bordeaux; he drank a cup of coffee, which seldom occurred to him, and finally a tiny glass of brandy.

When he had paid he felt quite lively and brisk, even a little perturbed. He said: "I will continue my walk as far as the entrance to the Bois de Boulogne. It will do me good."

He started. An old air which one of his neighbors used to sing long ago came to his mind:

"When the park grows green and gay
Then doth my brave lover say
Come with me, my sweet and fair,
To get a breath of air."

He hummed it continually, beginning it over again and again. Night had fallen upon Paris, a night without wind, a night of sweet calm. Monsieur Leras followed the Avenue de Bois de Boulogne and watched the cabs pass. They came with their bright lamps, one after another, giving a fleet glimpse of a couple embracing, the woman in light colored dress and the man clad in black.

It was a long procession of lovers, driving under the starry and sultry sky. They kept arriving continually. They passed, reclining in the carriages, silent, pressed to one another, lost in the hallucination, the emotion of desire, in the excitement of the approaching culmination. The warm darkness seemed full of floating kisses. A sensation of tenderness made the air languishing and stifling. All these embracing people, all these persons intoxicated with the same intention, the same thought, caused a fever around them. All these carriages full of caresses diffused as they passed, as it were, a subtile and disturbing emanation.

Monsieur Leras, a little wearied, finally, by walking, took a seat on a bench to watch these carriages loaded with love. And almost immediately a woman came near to him and took her place at his side.

"Good evening, my little man," she said.

He did not reply. She continued:

"Don't you want a sweetheart?"

"You are mistaken, Madame."

And she took his arm.

"Come, don't be a fool, listen—"

He had risen and gone away, his heart oppressed.

A hundred steps further on another woman approached him:

"Won't you sit down a moment with me, my fine boy?"

He said to her:

"Why do you lead such a life?"

"Name of God, it isn't always for my pleasure."

He continued in a soft voice:

"Then what compels you?"

She: "Must live, you know." And she went away singing.

Monsieur Leras stood astonished. Other women passed near him, similarly accosting him. It seemed to him that something dark was setting upon his head, something heartbreaking. And he seated himself again upon a bench. The carriages kept hurrying by.

"Better not to have come here," he thought, "I am all unsettled."

He began to think on all this love, venal or passionate, on all these kisses, bought or free, which streamed before him.

Love, he hardly knew what it meant. He never had had more than two or three sweethearts in all his life, his means not permitting. And he thought of that life which he had led, so different from the life of all, his life so dark, so dull, so flat, so empty.

There are beings who truly never have any luck. And all at once, as if a thick veil had been lifted, he perceived the misery, the infinite monotonous misery of his existence: the past misery, the present misery, the future misery; the last days like the first, with nothing before him, nothing behind him, nothing around him, nothing in his heart, nothing anywhere.

The carriages kept passing. He saw appearing and disappearing in the rapid flight of the open

fiacre, the two beings, silent and embracing. It seemed to him that the whole of humanity was filing before him, intoxicated with joy, with pleasure, with happiness. And he was alone, looking on at it, all alone. He would be still alone to-morrow, alone always, alone as no one else is alone.

He rose, took a few steps, and suddenly fatigued, as if he had walked for many miles, he sat down on the next bench.

What was awaiting him? What did he hope for? Nothing. He thought how good it must be when a man is old to find, on getting home, little prattling children there. To grow old is sweet when a person is surrounded by those beings who owe him their life, who love him, who caress him, saying those charming foolish words which warm the heart and console him for everything.

And thinking of his empty room, neat and sad, where never a person entered but himself, a feeling of distress overwhelmed his soul. It seemed to him that room was more lamentable even than his little office.

No one came to it; no one spoke in it. It was dead, silent, without the echo of a human voice. One would say that the walls had something of the people who lived within, something of their look, their face, their words.

The houses inhabited by happy families are more gay than the habitations of the wretched. His room was empty of memories, like his life, and the thought of going back into that room, all alone, of sleeping in his bed, of doing over again all his actions and all his duties of evening terrified him. And as if to

put himself further away from this gloomy lodging and from the moment when he would have to return to it he rose and, finding all at once the first pathway of the park, he entered a clump of woods to sit upon the grass.

He heard round about him, above him, everywhere, a confused sound, immense and continuous, made of innumerable different voices, near and far, a vague and enormous palpitation of life—the breath of Paris respiring like some colossal being.

The sun already high cast a flood of light upon the Bois de Boulogne. Some carriages began to circulate, and the horseback riders gaily arrived.

A couple were going at a walk through a lonely bridle path.

Suddenly the young woman, raising her eyes, perceived something brown among the branches: she raised her hand astonished and disturbed.

"Look—what is that?"

Then uttering a scream, she let herself fall into the arms of her companion who placed her on the ground.

The guards quickly summoned, unfastened an old man, hanging to a branch by his braces.

It was agreed that the deceased had hanged himself the evening before.

The papers found upon him disclosed the fact that he was the bookkeeper for Messrs. Labuze and Company and that his name was Leras.

They attributed his death to suicide, for which the cause could not be determined. Perhaps a sudden attack of madness.

A WIFE'S CONFESSION

MY FRIEND, you have asked me to relate to you the liveliest recollections of my life. I am very old, without relatives, without children; so I am free to make a confession to you. Promise me one thing — never to reveal my name.

I have been much loved, as you know; I have often myself loved. I was very beautiful; I may say this to-day, when my beauty is gone. Love was for me the life of the soul, just as the air is the life of the body. I would have preferred to die rather than exist without affection, without having somebody always to care for me. Women often pretend to love only once with all the strength of their hearts; it has often happened to be so violent in one of my attachments that I thought it would be impossible for my transports ever to end. However, they always died out in a natural fashion, like a fire when it has no more fuel.

I will tell you to-day the first of my adventures, in which I was very innocent, but which led to the

others. The horrible vengeance of that dreadful chemist of Pecq recalls to me the shocking drama of which I was, in spite of myself, a spectator.

I had been a year married to a rich man, Comte Hervé de Ker—a Breton of ancient family, whom I did not love, you understand. True love needs, I believe at any rate, freedom and impediments at the same time. The love which is imposed, sanctioned by law, and blessed by the priest—can we really call that love? A legal kiss is never as good as a stolen kiss. My husband was tall in stature, elegant, and a really fine gentleman in his manners. But he lacked intelligence. He spoke in a downright fashion, and uttered opinions that cut like the blade of a knife. He created the impression that his mind was full of ready-made views instilled into him by his father and mother, who had themselves got them from their ancestors. He never hesitated, but on every subject immediately made narrow-minded suggestions, without showing any embarrassment and without realizing that there might be other ways of looking at things. One felt that his head was closed up, that no ideas circulated in it, none of those ideas which renew a man's mind and make it sound, like a breath of fresh air passing through an open window into a house.

The château in which we lived was situated in the midst of a desolate tract of country. It was a large melancholy structure, surrounded by enormous trees, with tufts of moss on it resembling old men's white beards. The park, a real forest, was inclosed in a deep trench called the ha-ha; and at its extremity, near the moorland, we had big ponds full of reeds

and floating grass. Between the two, at the edge of a stream which connected them, my husband had got a little hut built for shooting wild ducks.

We had, in addition to our ordinary servants, a keeper, a sort of brute devoted to my husband to the death, and a chambermaid, almost a friend, passionately attached to me. I had brought her back from Spain with me five years before. She was a deserted child. She might have been taken for a gypsy with her dusky skin, her dark eyes, her hair thick as a wood and always clustering around her forehead. She was at the time sixteen years old, but she looked twenty.

The autumn was beginning. We hunted much, sometimes on neighboring estates, sometimes on our own; and I noticed a young man, the Baron de C——, whose visits at the château became singularly frequent. Then, he ceased to come; I thought no more about it; but I perceived that my husband changed in his demeanor toward me.

He seemed taciturn and preoccupied; he did not kiss me; and, in spite of the fact that he did not come into my room, as I insisted on separate apartments in order to live a little alone, I often at night heard a furtive step drawing near my door, and withdrawing a few minutes after.

As my window was on the ground floor, I thought I had also often heard some one prowling in the shadow around the château. I told my husband about it, and, having looked at me intensely for some seconds, he answered:

"It is nothing—it is the keeper."

* * * * * * *

Now, one evening, just after dinner, Hervé, who appeared to be extraordinarily gay, with a sly sort of gaiety, said to me:

"Would you like to spend three hours out with the guns, in order to shoot a fox who comes every evening to eat my hens?"

I was surprised. I hesitated; but, as he kept staring at me with singular persistency, I ended by replying:

"Why, certainly, my friend." I must tell you that I hunted like a man the wolf and the wild boar. So it was quite natural that he should suggest this shooting expedition to me.

But my husband, all of a sudden, had a curiously nervous look; and all the evening he seemed agitated, rising up and sitting down feverishly.

About ten o'clock he suddenly said to me:

"Are you ready?"

I rose; and, as he was bringing me my gun himself, I asked:

"Are we to load with bullets or with deershot?"

He showed some astonishment; then he rejoined:

"Oh! only with deershot; make your mind easy! that will be enough."

Then, after some seconds, he added in a peculiar tone:

"You may boast of having splendid coolness."

I burst out laughing.

"I? Why, pray? Coolness because I go to kill a fox? What are you thinking of, my friend?"

And we quietly made our way across the park. All the household slept. The full moon seemed to give a yellow tint to the old gloomy building, whose slate roof

glittered brightly. The two turrets that flanked it had two plates of light on their summits, and no noise disturbed the silence of this clear, sad night, sweet and still, which seemed in a death-trance. Not a breath of air, not a shriek from a toad, not a hoot from an owl; a melancholy numbness lay heavy on everything. When we were under the trees in the park, a sense of freshness stole over me, together with the odor of fallen leaves. My husband said nothing; but he was listening, he was watching, he seemed to be smelling about in the shadows, possessed from head to foot by the passion for the chase.

We soon reached the edges of the ponds.

Their tufts of rushes remained motionless; not a breath of air caressed them; but movements which were scarcely perceptible ran through the water. Sometimes the surface was stirred by something, and light circles gathered around, like luminous wrinkles enlarging indefinitely.

When we reached the hut, where we were to lie in wait, my husband made me go in first; then he slowly loaded his gun, and the dry cracking of the powder produced a strange effect on me. He saw that I was shuddering, and asked:

"Does this trial happen to be quite enough for you? If so, go back."

I was much surprised, and I replied:

"Not at all. I did not come to go back without doing anything. You seem queer this evening."

He murmured:

"As you wish." And we remained there without moving.

At the end of about half an hour, as nothing broke

the oppressive stillness of this bright autumn night, I said, in a low tone:

"Are you quite sure he is passing this way?"

Hervé winced as if I had bitten him, and, with his mouth close to my ear, he said:

"Make no mistake about it! I am quite sure."

And once more there was silence.

I believe I was beginning to get drowsy when my husband pressed my arm, and his voice, changed to a hiss, said:

"Do you see him there under the trees?"

I looked in vain; I could distinguish nothing. And slowly Hervé now cocked his gun, all the time fixing his eyes on my face.

I was myself making ready to fire, and suddenly, thirty paces in front of us, appeared in the full light of the moon a man who was hurrying forward with rapid movements, his body bent, as if he were trying to escape.

I was so stupefied that I uttered a loud cry; but, before I could turn round, there was a flash before my eyes; I heard a deafening report; and I saw the man rolling on the ground, like a wolf hit by a bullet.

I burst into dreadful shrieks, terrified, almost going mad; then a furious hand—it was Hervé's—seized me by the throat. I was flung down on the ground, then carried off by his strong arms. He ran, holding me up, till he reached the body lying on the grass, and he threw me on top of it violently, as if he wanted to break my head.

I thought I was lost; he was going to kill me; and he had just raised his heel up to my forehead

when, in his turn, he was gripped, knocked down, before I could yet realize what had happened.

I rose up abruptly, and I saw kneeling on top of him Porquita, my maid, clinging like a wild cat to him with desperate energy, tearing off his beard, his mustache, and the skin of his face.

Then, as if another idea had suddenly taken hold of her mind, she rose up, and, flinging herself on the corpse, she threw her arms around the dead man, kissing his eyes and his mouth, opening the dead lips with her own lips, trying to find in them a breath and the long, long kiss of lovers.

My husband, picking himself up, gazed at me. He understood, and, falling at my feet, said:

"Oh! forgive me, my darling, I suspected you, and I killed this girl's lover. It was my keeper that deceived me."

But I was watching the strange kisses of that dead man and that living woman, and her sobs and her writhings of sorrowing love, and at that moment I understood that I might be unfaithful to my husband.

A DEAD WOMAN'S SECRET

She had died painlessly, tranquilly, like a woman whose life was irreproachable; and she now lay on her back in bed, with closed eyes, calm features, her long white hair carefully arranged, as if she had again made her toilette ten minutes before her death. Her pale physiognomy was so composed, now that she had passed away, so resigned, that one felt sure a sweet soul had dwelt in that body, that this serene grandmother had spent an untroubled existence, that this virtuous woman had ended her life without any shock, without any remorse.

On his knees, beside the bed, her son, a magistrate of inflexible principles, and her daughter Marguerite—in religion, Sister Eulalie—were weeping distractedly. She had from the time of their infancy armed them with an inflexible code of morality, teaching them a religion without weakness and a sense of duty without any compromise. He, the son, had become a magistrate, and, wielding the weapon of the law, struck down without pity the feeble and the

erring. She, the daughter, quite penetrated with the virtue that had bathed her in this austere family, had become the spouse of God through disgust with men.

They had scarcely known their father; all they knew was that he had made their mother unhappy without learning any further details. The nun passionately kissed one hand of her dead mother, which hung down, a hand of ivory like that of Christ in the large crucifix which lay on the bed. At the opposite side of the prostrate body, the other hand seemed still to grasp the rumpled sheet with that wondering movement which is called the fold of the dying, and the lines had retained little wavy creases as a memento of those last motions which precede the eternal motionlessness. A few light taps at the door caused the two sobbing heads to look up, and the priest, who had just dined, entered the apartment. He was flushed, a little puffed, from the effects of the process of digestion which had just commenced; for he had put a good dash of brandy into his coffee in order to counteract the fatigue caused by the last nights he had remained up and that which he anticipated from the night that was still in store for him. He had put on a look of sadness, that simulated sadness of the priest to whom death is a means of livelihood. He made the sign of the cross, and, coming over to them with his professional gestures, said:

"Well, my poor children, I have come to help you to pass these mournful hours."

But Sister Eulalie suddenly rose up.

"Thanks, Father; but my brother and I would like to be left alone with her. These are the last moments that we now have for seeing her; so we

want to feel ourselves once more, the three of us, just as we were years ago when we — we — we were only children, and our poor — poor mother —" She was unable to finish with the flood of tears that gushed from her eyes and the sobs that were choking her.

But the priest bowed, with a more serene look on his face, for he was thinking of his bed. "Just as you please, my children."

Then, he kneeled down, again crossed himself, prayed, rose up, and softly stole away murmuring as he went: "She was a saint."

They were left alone, the dead woman and her children. A hidden timepiece kept regularly ticking in its dark corner, and through the open window the soft odors of hay and of woods penetrated, with faint gleams of moonlight. No sound in the fields outside, save the wandering croak of toads and now and then the humming of some nocturnal insect darting in like a ball, and knocking itself against the wall.

An infinite peace, a divine melancholy, a silent serenity surrounded this dead woman, seemed to emanate from her, to evaporate from her into the atmosphere outside and to calm Nature herself.

Then the magistrate, still on his knees, his head pressed against the bedclothes, in a far-off, heart-broken voice that pierced through the sheets and the coverlet, exclaimed:

"Mamma, mamma, mamma!" And the sister, sinking down on the floor, striking the wood with her forehead fanatically, twisting herself about and quivering like a person in an epileptic fit, groaned: "Jesus, Jesus — mamma — Jesus!"

And both of them, shaken by a hurricane of grief, panted with a rattling in their throats.

Then the fit gradually subsided, and they now wept in a less violent fashion, like the rainy calm that follows a squall on a storm-beaten sea. Then, after some time, they rose and fixed their glances on the beloved corpse. And memories, those memories of the past, so sweet, so torturing to-day, came back to their minds with all those little forgotten details, those little details so intimate and familiar, which make the being who is no more live over again. They recalled circumstances, words, smiles, certain intonations of voice which belonged to one whom they should never hear speaking to them again. They saw her once more happy and calm, and phrases she used in ordinary conversation rose to their lips. They even remembered a little movement of the hand peculiar to her, as if she were keeping time when she was saying something of importance.

And they loved her as they had never before loved her. And by the depth of their despair they realized how strongly they had been attached to her, and how desolate they would find themselves now.

She had been their mainstay, their guide, the best part of their youth, of that happy portion of their lives which had vanished; she had been the bond that united them to existence, the mother, the mamma, the creative flesh, the tie that bound them to their ancestors. They would henceforth be solitary, isolated; they would have nothing on earth to look back upon.

The nun said to her brother:

"You know how mamma used always to read over her old letters. They are all there in her desk.

Suppose we read them in our turn, and so revive all her life this night by her side. It would be like a kind of road of the cross, like making the acquaintance of her mother, of grandparents whom we never knew, whose letters are there, and of whom she has so often talked to us, you remember?"

* * * * * * *

And they drew forth from the drawer a dozen little packets of yellow paper, carefully tied up and placed close to one another. They flung these relics on the bed, and selecting one of them on which the word "Father" was written, they opened and read what was in it.

It consisted of those very old letters which are to be found in old family writing-desks, those letters which have the flavor of another century. The first said, "My darling"; another, "My beautiful little girl"; then others, "My dear child"; and then again, "My dear daughter." And suddenly the nun began reading aloud, reading for the dead her own history, all her tender souvenirs. And the magistrate listened, while he leaned on the bed, with his eyes on his mother's face. And the motionless corpse seemed happy.

Sister Eulalie, interrupting herself, said: "We ought to put them into the grave with her, to make a winding-sheet of them, and bury them with her."

And then she took up another packet, on which the descriptive word did not appear.

And in a loud tone she began:

"My adored one, I love you to distraction. Since yesterday I have been suffering like a damned soul burned by the recollection of you. I feel your lips on mine, your eyes under my eyes, your flesh under my flesh. I love you! I love you! You have made me mad!

My arms open! I pant with an immense desire to possess you again. My whole body calls out to you, wants you. I have kept in my mouth the taste of your kisses."

The magistrate rose up; the nun stopped reading. He snatched the letter from her and sought for the signature. There was none, save under the words, "He who adores you," the name "Henry." Their father's name was René. So then he was not the man.

Then, the son, with rapid fingers, fumbled in the packet of letters, took another of them, and read:

"I can do without your caresses no longer."

And, standing up, with the severity of a judge passing sentence, he gazed at the impassive face of the dead woman.

The nun, straight as a statue, with teardrops standing at each corner of her eyes, looked at her brother, waiting to see what he meant to do. Then he crossed the room, slowly reached the window, and looked out thoughtfully into the night.

When he turned back, Sister Eulalie, her eyes now quite dry, still remained standing near the bed, with a downcast look.

He went over to the drawer and flung in the letters which he had picked up from the floor. Then he drew the curtains round the bed.

And when the dawn made the candles on the table look pale, the son rose from his armchair, and, without even a parting glance at the mother whom he had separated from them and condemned, he said slowly:

"Now, my sister, let us leave the room."

LOVE'S AWAKENING

No one was surprised at the marriage of Mr. Simon Lebrument and Miss Jean Cordier. Mr. Lebrument came to buy out the office of Mr. Papillon; he needed, it was understood, money with which to pay for it; and Miss Jean Cordier had three hundred thousand francs clear, in stocks and bonds.

Mr. Lebrument was a handsome bachelor, who had style, the style of a notary, a provincial style, but, after all, some style, which was a rare thing at Boutigny-le-Rebours.

Miss Cordier had grace and freshness, grace a little awkward and freshness a little fixed up; but she was nevertheless, a pretty girl, desirable and entertaining.

The wedding ceremonies turned Boutigny topsy-turvy. The married couple was much admired when they returned to the conjugal domicile to conceal their happiness, having resolved to make a little, simple journey to Paris, after they had spent a few days together.

It was charming, these few days together, as Mr. Lebrument knew how to manage his early relations with his wife with a delicacy, a directness, and sense of fitness that was remarkable. He took for his motto: "Everything comes to him who waits." He knew how to be patient and energetic at the same time. His success was rapid and complete.

At the end of four days Mrs. Lebrument adored her husband. She could not bear to be a moment away from him. He must be near her all day long, that she might caress his hands, his beard, his nose, etc. She would sit upon his knees and, taking him by the ears, would say: "Open your mouth and shut your eyes." He opened his mouth with confidence, shut his eyes halfway, and then would receive a very long, sweet kiss that made great shivers in his back. And in his turn, he never had enough caresses, enough lips, enough hands, enough of anything with which to enjoy his wife from morning until evening, and from evening until morning.

As soon as the first week had slipped away he said to his young companion:

"If you wish, we might leave for Paris Tuesday of next week. We shall be like lovers who are not married; go about to the theaters, the restaurants, the concert *cafés*, and everywhere, everywhere."

She jumped for joy. "Oh! yes, yes," she replied, "let us go as soon as possible."

"And, as we must not forget anything, you might ask your father to have your dowry ready; I will take it with me, and at the same time pay Mr. Papillon."

She answered: "I will speak to him about it tomorrow morning."

Then he seized her in his arms and began again the little tendernesses she loved so much, and had reveled in now for eight days.

The Tuesday following, the father-in-law and the mother-in-law accompanied their daughter and son-in-law to the station, whence they set out for the capital. The father-in-law remarked:

"I tell you it is imprudent to carry so much money in your pocketbook." And the young notary smiled.

"Do not be disturbed, father-in-law," he answered, "I am accustomed to these things. You know that in my profession it often happens that I have nearly a million about me. By carrying it with me, we escape a lot of formalities and delays, to say the least. Do not give yourself any uneasiness."

Then the trainman cried out, "All aboard!" and they hurried into a compartment where they found themselves with two old ladies.

Lebrument murmured in his wife's ear: "How annoying! Now I cannot smoke."

She answered in a low tone: "I am sorry too, but not on account of your cigar."

The engine puffed and started. The journey lasted an hour, during which they could not say anything of importance, because the two old ladies did not go to sleep.

When they were in the Saint-Lazare station, in Paris, Mr. Lebrument said to his wife:

"If you wish, my dear, we will first go and breakfast on the Boulevard, then return at our leisure

to find our trunk and give it to the porter of some hotel."

She consented immediately: "Oh! yes," said she, "let us breakfast in some restaurant. Is it far from here?"

"Yes, rather far, but we will take an omnibus."

She was astonished: "Why not a cab?" she asked.

He groaned as he said smilingly: "And you are economical! A cab for five minutes' ride, at six sous per minute! You do not deprive yourself of anything!"

"That is true," said she, a little confused.

A large omnibus was passing, with three horses at a trot. Lebrument hailed it: "Conductor! eh, conductor!"

The heavy carriage stopped. The young notary pushed his wife inside, saying hurriedly, in a low voice:

"You get in while I climb up on the outside to smoke at least a cigarette before breakfast."

She had not time for any answer. The conductor, who had seized her by the arm to aid her in mounting the steps, pushed her into the 'bus, where she landed, half-frightened, upon a seat, and in a sort of stupor watched the feet of her husband through the windows at the back, as he climbed to the top of the imperial.

There she remained immovable between a large gentleman who smelled of a pipe and an old woman who smelled of a dog. All the other travelers, in two mute lines,—a grocer's boy, a workman, a sergeant of infantry, a gentleman with gold-rimmed spectacles and a silk cap with enormous visors, like gutters,

and two ladies with an important, mincing air, which seemed to say: We are here, although we should be in a better place. Then there were two good sisters, a little girl in long hair, and an undertaker. The assemblage had the appearance of a collection of caricatures in a freak museum, a series of expressions of the human countenance, like a row of grotesque puppets which one knocks down at a fair.

The jolts of the carriage made them toss their heads a little, and as they shook, the flesh of their cheeks trembled; and the disturbance of the rolling wheels gave them an idiotic or sleepy look.

The young woman remained inert: "Why did he not come with me?" she asked herself. A vague sadness oppressed her. He might, indeed, have deprived himself of his cigar!

The good sisters gave the signal to stop. They alighted, one after the other, leaving an odor of old and faded skirts.

Soon after they were gone another stopped the 'bus. A cook came in, red and out of breath. She sat down and placed her basket of provisions upon her knees. A strong odor of dishwater pervaded the omnibus.

"It is further than I thought," said the young woman to herself.

The undertaker got out and was replaced by a coachman who smelled of a stable. The girl in long hair was succeeded by an errand-boy who exhaled the perfume of his walks.

The notary's wife perceived all these things, ill at ease and so disheartened that she was ready to weep without knowing why.

Some others got out, still others came in. The omnibus went on through the interminable streets, stopped at the stations, and began its route again.

"How far it is!" said Jean. "Especially when one has nothing for diversion and cannot sleep!" She had not been so much fatigued for many days.

Little by little all the travelers got out. She remained alone, all alone. The conductor shouted:

"Vaugirard!"

As she blushed, he again repeated: "Vaugirard!"

She looked at him, not understanding that this must be addressed to her as all her neighbors had gone. For the third time the man said: "Vaugirard!"

Then she asked: "Where are we?"

He answered in a gruff voice: "We are at Vaugirard, Miss; I've told you twenty times already."

"Is it far from the Boulevard?" she asked.

"What Boulevard?"

"The Italian Boulevard."

"We passed that a long time ago."

"Ah! Will you be kind enough to tell my husband?"

"Your husband? Where is he?"

"On the outside."

"On the outside! It has been a long time since there was anybody there."

She made a terrified gesture. Then she said:

"How can it be? It is not possible. He got up there when I entered the omnibus. Look again; he must be there."

The conductor became rude: "Come, little one, this is talk enough. If there is one man lost, there

are ten to be found. Scamper out, now! You will find another in the street."

The tears sprung to her eyes. She insisted: "But, sir, you are mistaken, I assure you that you are mistaken. He had a large pocketbook in his hand."

The employee began to laugh: "A large pocketbook? I remember. Yes, he got out at the Madeleine. That's right! He's left you behind! Ha! ha!"

The carriage was standing still. She got down and looked up, in spite of herself to the roof, with an instinctive movement of the eye. It was totally deserted.

Then she began to weep aloud, without thinking that anyone was looking at or listening to her. Finally she said:

"What is going to become of me?"

The inspector came up and inquired: "What's the matter?"

The conductor answered in a jocose fashion:

"This lady's husband has left her on the way."

The other replied: "Now, now, that is nothing. I am at your service." And he turned on his heels.

Then she began to walk ahead, too much frightened, too much excited to think even where she was going. Where was she going? What should she do? How could such an error have occurred? Such an act of carelessness, of disregard, of unheard-of distraction!

She had two francs in her pocket. To whom could she apply? Suddenly she remembered her

cousin Barral, who was a clerk in the office of Naval Affairs.

She had just enough to hire a cab; she would go to him. And she met him just as he was starting for his office. Like Lebrument, he carried a large pocketbook under his arm.

She leaned out of the carriage and called: "Henry!"

He stopped, much surprised.

"Jeanne," said he, "here?—and alone? Where do you come from? What are you doing?"

She stammered, with her eyes full of tears: "My husband is lost somewhere—"

"Lost? where?"

"On the omnibus."

"On the omnibus! Oh!"

And she related to him the whole story, weeping much over the adventure.

He listened reflectively, and then asked:

"This morning? And was his head perfectly clear?"

"Oh! yes! And he had my dowry."

"Your dowry? The whole of it?"

"Yes, the whole of it—in order to pay for his office."

"Well, my dear cousin, your husband, whoever he is, is probably watching the wheel—this minute."

She did not yet comprehend. She stammered: "My husband—you say—"

"I say that he has run off with your—your capital—and that's all about it."

She remained standing there, suffocated with grief, murmuring:

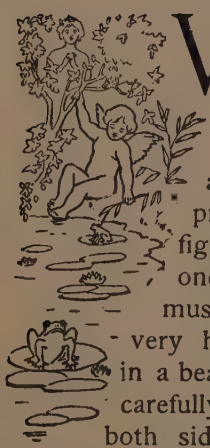
"Then he is—he is—is a wretch!"

Then, overcome with emotion, she fell on her cousin's shoulder, sobbing violently.

As people were stopping to look at them, he guided her gently into the entrance of his house, supporting her body. They mounted the steps, and as the maid came to open the door he ordered her:

"Sophie, run to the restaurant and bring breakfast for two persons. I shall not go to the office this morning."

BED NO. 29



WHEN Captain Epivent passed in the street all the ladies turned to look at him. He was the true type of a handsome officer of hussars. He was always on parade, always strutted a little and seemed preoccupied and proud of his leg, his figure, and his mustache. He had superb ones, it is true, a superb leg, figure, and mustache. The last-named was blond, very heavy, falling martially from his lip in a beautiful sweep the color of ripe wheat, carefully turned at the ends, and falling over both sides of his mouth in two powerful sprigs of hair cut square across. His waist was thin as if he wore a corset, while a vigorous masculine chest, bulged and arched, spread itself above his waist. His leg was admirable, a gymnastic leg, the leg of a dancer, whose muscular flesh outlined each movement under the clinging cloth of the red pantaloon.

He walked with muscles taut, with feet and arms apart, and with the slightly balanced step of the

cavalier, who knows how to make the most of his limbs and his carriage, and who seems a conqueror in a uniform, but looks commonplace in a mufti.

Like many other officers, Captain Epivent carried a civil costume badly. He had no air of elegance as soon as he was clothed in the gray or black of the shop clerk. But in his proper setting he was a triumph. He had besides a handsome face, the nose thin and curved, blue eyes, and a good forehead. He was bald, without ever being able to comprehend why his hair had fallen off. He consoled himself with thinking that, with a heavy mustache, a head a little bald was not so bad.

He scorned everybody in general, with a difference in the degrees of his scorn.

In the first place, for him the middle class did not exist. He looked at them as he would look at animals, without according them more of his attention than he would give to sparrows or chickens. Officers, alone, counted in his world; but he did not have the same esteem for all officers. He only respected handsome men; an imposing presence, the true, military quality being first. A soldier was a merry fellow, a devil, created for love and war, a man of brawn, muscle, and hair, nothing more. He classed the generals of the French army according to their figure, their bearing, and the stern look of their faces. Bourbaki appeared to him the greatest warrior of modern times.

He often laughed at the officers of the line who were short and fat, and puffed while marching. And he had a special scorn for the poor recruits from the polytechnic schools, those thin, little men with spec-

tacles, awkward and unskillful, who seemed as much made for a uniform as a wolf for saying mass, as he often asserted. He was indignant that they should be tolerated in the army, those abortions with the lank limbs, who marched like crabs, did not drink, ate little, and seemed to love equations better than pretty girls.

Captain Epivent himself had constant successes and triumphs with the fair sex.

Every time he took supper in company with a woman, he thought himself certain of finishing the night with her upon the same mattress, and, if unsurmountable obstacles hindered that evening, his victory was sure at least the following day. His comrades did not like him to meet their mistresses, and the merchants in the shops, who had their pretty wives at the counter, knew him, feared him, and hated him desperately. When he passed, the merchants' wives in spite of themselves exchanged a look with him through the glass of the front windows; one of those looks that avail more than tender words, which contain an appeal and a response, a desire and an avowal. And the husbands, who turned away with a sort of instinct, returned brusquely, casting a furious look at the proud, arched silhouette of the officer. And, when the captain has passed, smiling and content with his impression, the merchants, handling with nervous hands the objects spread out before them, declared:

"There's a great dandy. When shall we stop feeding all these good-for-nothings who go dragging their tinware through the streets? For my part, I would rather be a butcher than a soldier. Then if there's blood on my table, it is the blood of beasts,

at least. And he is useful is,the butcher; and the knife he carries has not killed men. I do not understand how these murderers are tolerated walking on the public streets, carrying with them their instruments of death. It is necessary to have them, I suppose, but at least, let them conceal themselves, and not dress up in masquerade, with their red breeches and blue coats. The executioner doesn't dress himself up, does he?"

The woman, without answering, would shrug her shoulders, while the husband, divining the gesture without seeing it, would cry:

"Anybody must be stupid to watch those fellows parade up and down."

Nevertheless, Captain Epivent's reputation for conquests was well established in the whole French army.

Now, in 1868, his regiment, the One Hundred and Second Hussars came into garrison at Rouen.

He was soon known in the town. He appeared every evening, toward five o'clock, upon the Boieldieu mall, to take his absinthe and coffee at the Comedy; and, before entering the establishment, he would always take a turn upon the promenade, to show his leg, his figure, and his mustaches.

The merchants of Rouen who also promenaded there with their hands behind their backs, preoccupied with business affairs, speaking in high and low voices, would sometimes throw him a glance and murmur:

"Egad! that's a handsome fellow!"

But when they knew him, they remarked:

"Look! Captain Epivent! But he's a rascal all the same!"

The women on meeting him had a very queer little movement of the head, a kind of shiver of modesty, as if they felt themselves grow weak or unclothed before him. They would lower their heads a little, with a smile upon their lips, as if they had a desire to be found charming and have a look from him. When he walked with a comrade the comrade never failed to murmur with jealous envy, each time that he saw the sport:

"This rascal of an Epivent has the chances!"

Among the licensed girls of the town it was a struggle, a race, to see who would carry him off. They all came at five o'clock, the officers' hour, to the Boieldieu mall, and dragged their skirts up and down the length of the walk, two by two, while the lieutenants, captains, and commanders, two by two, dragged their swords along the ground before entering the *café*.

One evening the beautiful Irma, the mistress, it was said, of M. Templier-Papon, the rich manufacturer, stopped her carriage in front of the Comedy and, getting out, made a pretense of buying some paper or some visiting cards of M. Paulard, the engraver, in order to pass before the officers' tables and cast a look at Captain Epivent which seemed to say: "When you will," so clearly that Colonel Prune, who was drinking the green liquor with his lieutenant-colonel, could not help muttering:

"Confound that fellow! But he has the chances, that scamp!"

The remark of the Colonel was repeated, and Cap-

tain Epivent, moved by this approbation of his superior, passed the next day and many times after that under the windows of the beauty, in his most captivating attitude.

She saw him, showed herself, and smiled.

That same evening he was her lover.

They attracted attention, made an exhibition of their attachment, and mutually compromised themselves, both of them proud of their adventure.

Nothing was so much talked of in town as the beautiful Irma and the officer. M. Templier-Papon alone was ignorant of their relation.

Captain Epivent beamed with glory; every instant he would say:

"Irma happened to say to me—Irma told me tonight—or, yesterday at dinner Irma said—"

For a whole year they walked with and displayed in Rouen this love like a flag taken from the enemy. He felt himself aggrandized by this conquest, envied, more sure of the future, surer of the decoration so much desired, for the eyes of all were upon him, and he was satisfied to find himself well in sight, instead of being forgotten.

But here war was declared, and the Captain's regiment was one of the first to be sent to the front. The adieux were lamentable. They lasted the whole night long.

Sword, red breeches, cap, and jacket were all overturned from the back of a chair upon the floor; robes, skirts, silk stockings, also fallen down, were spread around and mingled with the uniform in distress upon the carpet; the room upside down as if

there had been a battle; Irma wild, her hair unbound, threw her despairing arms around the officer's neck, straining him to her; then, leaving him, rolled upon the floor, overturning the furniture, catching the fringes of the armchairs, biting their feet, while the Captain, much moved, but not skillful at consolation, repeated:

"Irma, my little Irma, do not cry so, it is necessary."

He occasionally wiped a tear from the corner of his eye with the end of his finger. They separated at daybreak. She followed her lover in her carriage as far as the first stopping-place. Then she kissed him before the whole regiment at the moment of separation. They even found this very genteel, worthy, and very romantic; and the comrades pressed the Captain's hand and said to him:

"Confound you, rogue, she has a heart, all the same, the little one."

They seemed to see something patriotic in it.

The regiment was sorely proved during the campaign. The Captain conducted himself heroically and finally received the cross of honor. Then, the war ended, he returned to Rouen and the garrison.

Immediately upon his return he asked of news of Irma, but no one was able to give him anything exact. Some said she was married to a Prussian major. Others, that she had gone to her parents, who were farmers in the suburbs of Yvetot.

He even sent his orderly to the mayor's office to consult the registry of deaths. The name of his mistress was not to be found.

He was very angry, which fact he paraded everywhere. He even took the enemy to task for his unhappiness, attributing to the Prussians, who had occupied Rouen, the disappearance of the young girl, declaring:

"In the next war, they shall pay well for it, the beggars!"

Then, one morning as he entered the mess-room at the breakfast hour, an old porter, in a blouse and an oilcloth cap, gave him a letter, which he opened and read:

"My Dearie: I am in the hospital, very ill, very ill. Will you not come and see me? It would give me so much pleasure!

"Irma."

The Captain grew pale and, moved with pity, declared:

"It's too bad! The poor girl! I will go there as soon as breakfast."

And during the whole time at the table, he told the officers that Irma was in the hospital, and that he was going to see her that blessed morning. It must be the fault of those unspeakable Prussians. She had doubtless found herself alone without a sou, broken down with misery, for they must certainly have stolen her furniture.

"Ah! the dirty whelps!"

Everybody listened with great excitement. Scarcely had he slipped his napkin in his wooden ring, when he rose and, taking his sword from the peg, and swelling out his chest to make him thin, hooked his belt and set out with hurried step to the city hospital.

But entrance to the hospital building, where he expected to enter immediately, was sharply refused him, and he was obliged to find his Colonel and explain his case to him in order to get a word from him to the director.

This man, after having kept the handsome Captain waiting some time in his anteroom, gave him an authorized pass and a cold and disapproving greeting.

Inside the door he felt himself constrained in this asylum of misery and suffering and death. A boy in the service showed him the way. He walked upon tiptoe, that he might make no noise, through the long corridors, where floated a slight, moist odor of illness and medicines. A murmur of voices alone disturbed the silence of the hospital.

At times, through an open door, the Captain perceived a dormitory, with its rows of beds whose clothes were raised by the forms of the bodies.

Some convalescents were seated in chairs at the foot of their couches, sewing, and clothed in the uniform gray cloth dress with white cap.

His guide suddenly stopped before one of these corridors filled with patients. He read on the door, in large letters: "Syphilis." The Captain started; then he felt that he was blushing. An attendant was preparing a medicine at a little wooden table at the door.

"I will show you," said she, "it is bed 29."

And she walked ahead of the officer. She indicated a bed: "There it is."

There was nothing to be seen but a bundle of bedclothes. Even the head was concealed under the

coverlet. Everywhere faces were to be seen on the couches, pale faces, astonished at the sight of a uniform, the faces of women, young women and old women, but all seemingly plain and common in the humble, regulation garb.

The Captain, very much disturbed, supporting his sword in one hand and carrying his cap in the other, murmured:

"Irma."

There was a sudden motion in the bed and the face of his mistress appeared, but so changed, so tired, so thin, that he would scarcely have known it.

She gasped, overcome by emotion, and then said:

"Albert!—Albert! It is you! Oh! I am so glad—so glad." And the tears ran down her cheeks.

The attendant brought a chair. "Be seated, sir," she said.

He sat down and looked at the pale, wretched countenance, so little like that of the beautiful, fresh girl he had left. Finally he said:

"What seems to be the matter with you?"

She replied, weeping: "You know well enough, it is written on the door." And she hid her eyes under the edge of the bedclothes.

Dismayed and ashamed, he continued: "How have you caught it, my poor girl?"

She answered: "It was those beasts of Prussians. They took me almost by force and then poisoned me."

He found nothing to add. He looked at her and kept turning his cap around on his knees.

The other patients gazed at him, and he believed that he detected an odor of putrefaction, of con-

taminated flesh, in this corridor full of girls tainted with this ignoble, terrible malady.

She murmured: "I do not believe that I shall recover. The doctor says it is very serious."

Then she perceived the cross upon the officer's breast and cried:

"Oh! you have been honored; now I am content. How contented I am! If I could only embrace you!"

A shiver of fear and disgust ran along the Captain's skin at the thought of this kiss. He had a desire to make his escape, to be in the clear air and never see this woman again. He remained, however, not knowing how to make the adieux, and finally stammered:

"You took no care of yourself, then."

A flame flashed in Irma's eyes: "No, the desire to avenge myself came to me when I should have broken away from it. And I poisoned them too, all, all that I could. As long as there were any of them in Rouen, I had no thought for myself."

He declared, in a constrained tone in which there was a little note of gaiety: "So far, you have done some good."

Getting animated, and her cheek-bones getting red, she answered:

"Oh! yes, there will more than one of them die from my fault. I tell you I had my vengeance."

Again he said: "So much the better." Then rising, he added: "Well, I must leave you now, because I have only time to meet my appointment with the Colonel—"

She showed much emotion, crying out: "Already! You leave me already! And when you have scarcely arrived!"

But he wished to go at any cost, and said:

"But you see that I came immediately; and it is absolutely necessary that I be at the Colonel's at an appointed time."

She asked: "Is it still Colonel Prune?"

"Still Colonel Prune. He was twice wounded."

She continued: "And your comrades? Have some of them been killed?"

"Yes. Saint-Timon, Savagnat, Poli, Saprival, Robert, De Courson, Pasafil, Santal, Caravan, and Poivrin are dead. Sahel had an arm carried off and Courvoisin a leg amputated. Paquet lost his right eye."

She listened, much interested. Then suddenly she stammered:

"Will you kiss me, say? before you leave me; Madame Langlois is not there."

And, in spite of the disgust which came to his lips, he placed them against the wan forehead, while she, throwing her arms around him, scattered random kisses over his blue jacket.

Then she said: "You will come again? Say that you will come again— Promise me that you will."

"Yes, I promise."

"When, now. Can you come Thursday?"

"Yes, Thursday—"

"Thursday at two o'clock?"

"Yes, Thursday at two o'clock."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

"Adieu, my dearie."

"Adieu."

And he went away, confused by the staring glances of those in the dormitory, bending his tall

form to make himself seem smaller. And when he was in the street he took a long breath.

That evening his comrades asked him: "Well, how is Irma?"

He answered in a constrained voice: "She has a trouble with the lungs; she is very ill."

But a little lieutenant, scenting something from his manner, went to headquarters, and, the next day, when the Captain went into mess, he was welcomed by a volley of laughter and jokes. They had found vengeance at last.

It was learned further that Irma had made a spite-marriage with the staff-major of the Prussians, that she had gone through the country on horseback with the colonel of the Blue Hussars, and many others, and that, in Rouen, she was no longer called anything but the "wife of the Prussians."

For eight days the Captain was the victim of his regiment. He received by post and by messenger, notes from those who can reveal the past and the future, circulars of specialists, and medicines, the nature of which was inscribed on the package.

And the Colonel, catching the drift of it, said in a severe tone:

"Well, the Captain had a pretty acquaintance! I send him my compliments."

At the end of twelve days he was appealed to by another letter from Irma. He tore it up with rage and made no reply to it.

A week later she wrote him again that she was very ill and wished to see him to say farewell.

He did not answer.

After some days more he received a note from a chaplain of the hospital.

"The girl Irma Pavolin is on her deathbed and begs you to come."

He dared not refuse to oblige the chaplain, but he entered the hospital with a heart swelling with wicked anger, with wounded vanity, and humiliation.

He found her scarcely changed at all and thought that she had deceived him. "What do you wish of me?" he asked.

"I wish to say farewell. It appears that I am near the end."

He did not believe it.

"Listen," said he, "you have made me the laughing stock of the regiment, and I do not wish it to continue."

She asked: "What have I done?"

He was irritated at not knowing how to answer. But he said:

"Is it nothing that I return here to be joked by everybody on your account?"

She looked at him with languid eyes, where shone a pale light of anger, and answered:

"What can I have done? I have not been genteel with you, perhaps! Is it because I have sometimes asked for something? But for you, I would have remained with M. Templier-Papon, and would not have found myself here to-day. No, you see, if anyone has reproaches to make it is not you."

He answered in a clear tone: "I have not made reproaches, but I cannot continue to come to see you, because your conduct with the Prussians has been the shame of the town."

She sat up, with a little shake, in the bed, as she replied:

"My conduct with the Prussians? But when I tell you that they took me, and when I tell you that if I took no thought of myself, it was because I wished to poison them! If I had wished to cure myself, it would not have been so difficult, I can tell you! But I wished to kill them, and I have killed them, come now! I have killed them!"

He remained standing: "In any case," said he, "it was a shame."

She had a kind of suffocation, and then replied:

"Why is it a shame for me to cause them to die and try to exterminate them, tell me? You did not talk that way when you used to come to my house in Jeanne-d'Arc street. Ah! it is a shame! You have not done as much, with your cross of honor! I deserve more merit than you, do you understand, more than you, for I have killed more Prussians than you!"

He stood stupefied before her, trembling with indignation. He stammered: "Be still — you must — be still — because those things — I cannot allow — anyone to touch upon — "

But she was not listening: "What harm have you done the Prussians? Would it ever have happened if you had kept them from coming to Rouen? Tell me! It is you who should stop and listen. And I have done more harm than you, I, yes, more harm to them than you, and I am going to die for it, while you are singing songs and making yourself fine to inveigle women — "

Upon each bed a head was raised and all eyes looked at this man in uniform, who stammered again:

"You must be still—more quiet—you know—"

But she would not be quiet. She cried out:

"Ah! yes, you are a pretty *poser!* I know you well. I know you. And I tell you that I have done them more harm than you—I—and that I have killed more than all your regiment together—come now, you coward."

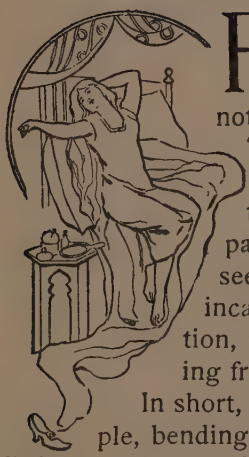
He went away, in fact he fled, stretching his long legs as he passed between the two rows of beds where the syphilitic patients were becoming excited. And he heard the gasping, stifled voice of Irma pursuing him:

"More than you—yes—I have killed more than you—"

He tumbled down the staircase four steps at a time, and ran until he was shut fast in his room.

The next day he heard that she was dead.

BALL-OF-FAT



For many days now the fag-end of the army had been straggling through the town. They were not troops, but a disbanded horde. The beards of the men were long and filthy, their uniforms in tatters, and they advanced at an easy pace without flag or regiment. All seemed worn-out and back-broken, incapable of a thought or a resolution, marching by habit solely, and falling from fatigue as soon as they stopped. In short, they were a mobilized, pacific people, bending under the weight of the gun; some little squads on the alert, easy to take alarm and prompt in enthusiasm, ready to attack or to flee; and in the midst of them, some red breeches, the remains of a division broken up in a great battle; some somber artillery men in line with these varied kinds of foot soldiers; and, sometimes the brilliant helmet of a dragoon on foot who followed with difficulty the shortest march of the lines.

Some legions of free-shooters, under the heroic names of "Avengers of the Defeat," "Citizens of the

Tomb," "Partakers of Death," passed in their turn with the air of bandits.

Their leaders were former cloth or grain merchants, ex-merchants in tallow or soap, warriors of circumstance, elected officers on account of their escutcheons and the length of their mustaches, covered with arms and with braid, speaking in constrained voices, discussing plans of campaign, and pretending to carry agonized France alone on their swaggering shoulders, but sometimes fearing their own soldiers, prison-birds, that were often brave at first and later proved to be plunderers and debauchees.

It was said that the Prussians were going to enter Rouen.

The National Guard who for two months had been carefully reconnoitering in the neighboring woods, shooting sometimes their own sentinels, and ready for a combat whenever a little wolf stirred in the thicket, had now returned to their firesides. Their arms, their uniforms, all the murderous accoutrements with which they had lately struck fear into the national heart for three leagues in every direction, had suddenly disappeared.

The last French soldiers finally came across the Seine to reach the Audemer bridge through Saint-Sever and Bourg-Achard; and, marching behind, on foot, between two officers of ordnance, the General, in despair, unable to do anything with these incongruous tatters, himself lost in the breaking-up of a people accustomed to conquer, and disastrously beaten, in spite of his legendary bravery.

A profound calm, a frightful, silent expectancy had spread over the city. Many of the heavy citizens,

emasculated by commerce, anxiously awaited the conquerors, trembling lest their roasting spits or kitchen knives be considered arms.

All life seemed stopped; shops were closed, the streets dumb. Sometimes an inhabitant, intimidated by this silence, moved rapidly along next the walls. The agony of waiting made them wish the enemy would come.

In the afternoon of the day which followed the departure of the French troops, some uhlans, coming from one knows not where, crossed the town with celerity. Then, a little later, a black mass descended the side of St. Catharine, while two other invading bands appeared by the way of Darnetal and Boisguillaume. The advance guard of the three bodies joined one another at the same moment in Hotel de Ville square and, by all the neighboring streets, the German army continued to arrive, spreading out its battalions, making the pavement resound under their hard, rhythmic step.

Some orders of the commander, in a foreign, guttural voice, reached the houses which seemed dead and deserted, while behind closed shutters, eyes were watching these victorious men, masters of the city, of fortunes, of lives, through the "rights of war." The inhabitants, shut up in their rooms, were visited with the kind of excitement that a cataclysm, or some fatal upheaval of the earth, brings to us, against which all wisdom, all force is useless. For the same sensation is produced each time that the established order of things is overturned, when security no longer exists, and all that protect the laws of man and of nature find themselves at the mercy of unreasoning,

ferocious brutality. The trembling of the earth crushing the houses and burying an entire people; a river overflowing its banks and carrying in its course the drowned peasants, carcasses of beeves, and girders snatched from roofs, or a glorious army massacring those trying to defend themselves, leading others prisoners, pillaging in the name of the Sword and thanking God to the sound of the cannon, all are alike frightful scourges which disconcert all belief in eternal justice, all the confidence that we have in the protection of Heaven and the reason of man.

Some detachments rapped at each door, then disappeared into the houses. It was occupation after invasion. Then the duty commences for the conquered to show themselves gracious toward the conquerors.

After some time, as soon as the first terror disappears, a new calm is established. In many families, the Prussian officer eats at the table. He is sometimes well bred and, through politeness, pities France, and speaks of his repugnance in taking part in this affair. One is grateful to him for this sentiment; then, one may be, some day or other, in need of his protection. By treating him well, one has, perhaps, a less number of men to feed. And why should we wound anyone on whom we are entirely dependent? To act thus would be less bravery than temerity. And temerity is no longer a fault of the commoner of Rouen, as it was at the time of the heroic defense, when their city became famous. Finally, each told himself that the highest judgment of French urbanity required that they be allowed to be polite to the strange soldier in the house, provided they did not show themselves familiar with him in public. Out-

side they would not make themselves known to each other, but at home they could chat freely, and the German might remain longer each evening warming his feet at their hearthstones.

The town even took on, little by little, its ordinary aspect. The French scarcely went out, but the Prussian soldiers grumbled in the streets. In short, the officers of the Blue Hussars, who dragged with arrogance their great weapons of death up and down the pavement, seemed to have no more grievous scorn for the simple citizens than the officers or the sportsmen who, the year before, drank in the same *cafés*.

There was nevertheless, something in the air, something subtle and unknown, a strange, intolerable atmosphere, like a penetrating odor, the odor of invasion. It filled the dwellings and the public places, changed the taste of the food, gave the impression of being on a journey, far away, among barbarous and dangerous tribes.

The conquerors exacted money, much money. The inhabitants always paid and they were rich enough to do it. But the richer a trading Norman becomes the more he suffers at every outlay, at each part of his fortune that he sees pass from his hands into those of another.

Therefore, two or three leagues below the town, following the course of the river toward Croisset, Dieppedalle, or Biessart, mariners and fishermen often picked up the swollen corpse of a German in uniform from the bottom of the river, killed by the blow of a knife, the head crushed with a stone, or perhaps thrown into the water by a push from the high bridge. The slime of the river bed buried these ob-

scure vengeances, savage, but legitimate, unknown heroisms, mute attacks more perilous than the battles of broad day, and without the echoing sound of glory.

For hatred of the foreigner always arouses some intrepid ones, who are ready to die for an idea.

Finally, as soon as the invaders had brought the town quite under subjection with their inflexible discipline, without having been guilty of any of the horrors for which they were famous along their triumphal line of march, people began to take courage, and the need of trade put new heart into the commerce of the country. Some had large interests at Havre, which the French army occupied, and they wished to try and reach this port by going to Dieppe by land and there embarking.

They used their influence with the German soldiers with whom they had an acquaintance, and finally, an authorization of departure was obtained from the General-in-chief.

Then, a large diligence, with four horses, having been engaged for this journey, and ten persons having engaged seats in it, it was resolved to set out on Tuesday morning before daylight, in order to escape observation.

For some time before, the frost had been hardening the earth and on Monday, toward three o'clock, great black clouds coming from the north brought the snow which fell without interruption during the evening and all night.

At half past four in the morning, the travelers met in the courtyard of Hotel Normandie, where they were to take the carriage.

They were still full of sleep, and shivering with cold under their wraps. They could only see each other dimly in the obscure light, and the accumulation of heavy winter garments made them all resemble fat curates in long cassocks. Only two of the men were acquainted; a third accosted them and they chatted: "I'm going to take my wife," said one. "I too," said another. "And I," said the third. The first added: "We shall not return to Rouen, and if the Prussians approach Havre, we shall go over to England." All had the same projects, being of the same mind.

As yet the horses were not harnessed. A little lantern, carried by a stable boy, went out one door from time to time, to immediately appear at another. The feet of the horses striking the floor could be heard, although deadened by the straw and litter, and the voice of a man talking to the beasts, sometimes swearing, came from the end of the building. A light tinkling of bells announced that they were taking down the harness; this murmur soon became a clear and continuous rhythm by the movement of the animal, stopping sometimes, then breaking into a brusque shake which was accompanied by the dull stamp of a sabot upon the hard earth.

The door suddenly closed. All noise ceased. The frozen citizens were silent; they remained immovable and stiff.

A curtain of uninterrupted white flakes constantly sparkled in its descent to the ground. It effaced forms, and powdered everything with a downy moss. And nothing could be heard in the great silence. The town was calm, and buried under the wintry

frost, as this fall of snow, unnamable and floating, a sensation rather than a sound (trembling atoms which only seem to fill all space), came to cover the earth.

The man reappeared with his lantern, pulling at the end of a rope a sad horse which would not come willingly. He placed him against the pole, fastened the traces, walked about a long time adjusting the harness, for he had the use of but one hand, the other carrying the lantern. As he went for the second horse, he noticed the travelers, motionless, already white with snow, and said to them: "Why not get into the carriage? You will be under cover, at least."

They had evidently not thought of it, and they hastened to do so. The three men installed their wives at the back and then followed them. Then the other forms, undecided and veiled, took in their turn the last places without exchanging a word.

The floor was covered with straw, in which the feet ensconced themselves. The ladies at the back having brought little copper foot stoves, with a carbon fire, lighted them and, for some time, in low voices, enumerated the advantages of the appliances, repeating things that they had known for a long time.

Finally, the carriage was harnessed with six horses instead of four, because the traveling was very bad, and a voice called out:

"Is everybody aboard?"

And a voice within answered: "Yes."

They were off. The carriage moved slowly, slowly for a little way. The wheels were imbedded in the snow; the whole body groaned with heavy cracking sounds; the horses glistened, puffed, and smoked; and

the great whip of the driver snapped without ceasing, hovering about on all sides, knotting and unrolling itself like a thin serpent, lashing brusquely some horse on the rebound, which then put forth its most violent effort.

Now the day was imperceptibly dawning. The light flakes, which one of the travelers, a Rouenese by birth, said looked like a shower of cotton, no longer fell. A faint light filtered through the great, dull clouds, which rendered more brilliant the white of the fields, where appeared a line of great trees clothed in whiteness, or a chimney with a cap of snow.

In the carriage, each looked at the others curiously, in the sad light of this dawn.

At the back, in the best places, Mr. Loiseau, wholesale merchant of wine, of Grand-Pont street, and Mrs. Loiseau were sleeping opposite each other. Loiseau had bought out his former patron who failed in business, and made his fortune. He sold bad wine at a good price to small retailers in the country, and passed among his friends and acquaintances as a knavish wag, a true Norman full of deceit and joviality.

His reputation as a sharper was so well established that one evening at the residence of the prefect, Mr. Tournel, author of some fables and songs, of keen, satirical mind, a local celebrity, having proposed to some ladies, who seemed to be getting a little sleepy, that they make up a game of "Loiseau tricks," the joke traversed the rooms of the prefect, reached those of the town, and then, in the months to come, made many a face in the province expand with laughter.

Loiseau was especially known for his love of farce of every kind, for his jokes, good and bad; and no one could ever talk with him without thinking: "He is invaluable, this Loiseau." Of tall figure, his balloon-shaped front was surmounted by a ruddy face surrounded by gray whiskers.

His wife, large, strong, and resolute, with a quick, decisive manner, was the order and arithmetic of this house of commerce, while he was the life of it through his joyous activity.

Beside them, Mr. Carré-Lamadon held himself with great dignity, as if belonging to a superior caste; a considerable man, in cottons, proprietor of three mills, officer of the Legion of Honor, and member of the General Council. He had remained, during the Empire, chief of the friendly opposition, famous for making the Emperor pay more dear for rallying to the cause than if he had combated it with blunted arms, according to his own story. Madame Carré-Lamadon, much younger than her husband, was the consolation of officers of good family sent to Rouen in garrison. She sat opposite her husband, very dainty, petite, and pretty, wrapped closely in furs and looking with sad eyes at the interior of the carriage.

Her neighbors, the Count and Countess Hubert de Breville, bore the name of one of the most ancient and noble families of Normandy. The Count, an old gentleman of good figure, accentuated, by the artifices of his toilette, his resemblance to King Henry IV., who, following a glorious legend of the family, had impregnated one of the De Breville ladies, whose husband, for this reason, was made a count and governor of the province,

A colleague of Mr. Carré-Lamadon in the General Council, Count Hubert represented the Orléans party in the Department.

The story of his marriage with the daughter of a little captain of a privateer had always remained a mystery. But as the Countess had a grand air, received better than anyone, and passed for having been loved by the son of Louis Philippe, all the nobility did her honor, and her salon remained the first in the country, the only one which preserved the old gallantry, and to which the *entrée* was difficult. The fortune of the Brevilles amounted, it was said, to five hundred thousand francs in income, all in good securities.

These six persons formed the foundation of the carriage company, the society side, serene and strong, honest, established people, who had both religion and principles.

By a strange chance, all the women were upon the same seat; and the Countess had for neighbors two sisters who picked at long strings of beads and muttered some *Paters* and *Aves*. One was old and as pitted with smallpox as if she had received a broadside of grapeshot full in the face. The other, very sad, had a pretty face and a disease of the lungs, which, added to their devoted faith, illumined them and made them appear like martyrs.

Opposite these two devotees were a man and a woman who attracted the notice of all. The man, well known, was Cornudet the democrat, the terror of respectable people. For twenty years he had soaked his great red beard in the *bocks* of all the democratic *cafés*. He had consumed with his friends and *con-*

frères a rather pretty fortune left him by his father, an old confectioner, and he awaited the establishing of the Republic with impatience, that he might have the position he merited by his great expenditures. On the fourth of September, by some joke perhaps, he believed himself elected prefect, but when he went to assume the duties, the clerks of the office were masters of the place and refused to recognize him, obliging him to retreat. Rather a good bachelor, on the whole, inoffensive and serviceable, he had busied himself, with incomparable ardor, in organizing the defense against the Prussians. He had dug holes in all the plains, cut down young trees from the neighboring forests, sown snares over all routes and, at the approach of the enemy, took himself quickly back to the town. He now thought he could be of more use in Havre where more entrenchments would be necessary.

The woman, one of those called a coquette, was celebrated for her *embonpoint,* which had given her the nickname of "Ball-of-Fat." Small, round, and fat as lard, with puffy fingers choked at the phalanges, like chaplets of short sausages; with a stretched and shining skin, an enormous bosom which shook under her dress, she was, nevertheless, pleasing and sought after, on account of a certain freshness and breeziness of disposition. Her face was a round apple, a peony bud ready to pop into bloom, and inside that opened two great black eyes, shaded with thick brows that cast a shadow within; and below, a charming mouth, humid for kissing, furnished with shining, microscopic baby teeth. She was, it was said, full of admirable qualities.

As soon as she was recognized, a whisper went around among the honest women, and the words "prostitute" and "public shame" were whispered so loud that she raised her head. Then she threw at her neighbors such a provoking, courageous look that a great silence reigned, and everybody looked down except Loiseau, who watched her with an exhilarated air.

And immediately conversation began among the three ladies, whom the presence of this girl had suddenly rendered friendly, almost intimate. It seemed to them they should bring their married dignity into union in opposition to that sold without shame; for legal love always takes on a tone of contempt for its free *confrère*.

The three men, also drawn together by an instinct of preservation at the sight of Cornudet, talked money with a certain high tone of disdain for the poor. Count Hubert talked of the havoc which the Prussians had caused, the losses which resulted from being robbed of cattle and from destroyed crops, with the assurance of a great lord, ten times millionaire whom these ravages would scarcely cramp for a year. Mr. Carré-Lamadon, largely experienced in the cotton industry, had had need of sending six hundred thousand francs to England, as a trifle in reserve if it should be needed. As for Loiseau, he had arranged with the French administration to sell them all the wines that remained in his cellars, on account of which the State owed him a formidable sum, which he counted on collecting at Havre.

And all three threw toward each other swift and amicable glances.

Although in different conditions, they felt themselves to be brothers through money, that grand freemasonry of those who possess it, and make the gold rattle by putting their hands in their trousers' pockets.

The carriage went so slowly that at ten o'clock in the morning they had not gone four leagues. The men had got down three times to climb hills on foot. They began to be disturbed, because they should be now taking breakfast at Tôtes and they despaired now of reaching there before night. Each one had begun to watch for an inn along the route, when the carriage foundered in a snowdrift, and it took two hours to extricate it.

Growing appetites troubled their minds; and no eating-house, no wine shop showed itself, the approach of the Prussians and the passage of the troops having frightened away all these industries.

The gentlemen ran to the farms along the way for provisions, but they did not even find bread, for the defiant peasant had concealed his stores for fear of being pillaged by the soldiers who, having nothing to put between their teeth, took by force whatever they discovered.

Toward one o'clock in the afternoon, Loiseau announced that there was a decided hollow in his stomach. Everybody suffered with him, and the violent need of eating, ever increasing, had killed conversation.

From time to time some one yawned; another immediately imitated him; and each, in his turn, in accordance with his character, his knowledge of life, and his social position, opened his mouth with carelessness or modesty, placing his hand quickly before the yawning hole from whence issued a vapor.

Ball-of-Fat, after many attempts, bent down as if seeking something under her skirts. She hesitated a second, looked at her neighbors, then sat up again tranquilly. The faces were pale and drawn. Loiseau affirmed that he would give a thousand francs for a small ham. His wife made a gesture, as if in protest; but she kept quiet. She was always troubled when anyone spoke of squandering money, and could not comprehend any pleasantry on the subject. "The fact is," said the Count, "I cannot understand why I did not think to bring some provisions with me." Each reproached himself in the same way.

However, Cornudet had a flask full of rum. He offered it; it was refused coldly. Loiseau alone accepted two swallows, and then passed back the flask saying, by way of thanks: "It is good all the same; it is warming and checks the appetite." The alcohol put him in good-humor and he proposed that they do as they did on the little ship in the song, eat the fattest of the passengers. This indirect allusion to Ball-of-Fat choked the well-bred people. They said nothing. Cornudet alone laughed. The two good sisters had ceased to mumble their rosaries and, with their hands enfolded in their great sleeves, held themselves immovable, obstinately lowering their eyes, without doubt offering to Heaven the suffering it had brought upon them.

Finally, at three o'clock, when they found themselves in the midst of an interminable plain, without a single village in sight, Ball-of-Fat bending down quickly drew from under the seat a large basket covered with a white napkin.

At first she brought out a little china plate and a

silver cup; then a large dish in which there were two whole chickens, cut up and imbedded in their own jelly. And one could still see in the basket other good things, some *pâtés*, fruits, and sweetmeats, provisions for three days if they should not see the kitchen of an inn. Four necks of bottles were seen among the packages of food. She took a wing of a chicken and began to eat it delicately, with one of those little biscuits called "Regence" in Normandy.

All looks were turned in her direction. Then the odor spread, enlarging the nostrils and making the mouth water, besides causing a painful contraction of the jaw behind the ears. The scorn of the women for this girl became ferocious, as if they had a desire to kill her and throw her out of the carriage into the snow, her, her silver cup, her basket, provisions and all.

But Loiseau with his eyes devoured the dish of chicken. He said: "Fortunately, Madame had more precaution than we. There are some people who know how to think ahead always."

She turned toward him, saying: "If you would like some of it, sir? It is hard to go without breakfast so long."

He saluted her and replied: "Faith, I frankly cannot refuse; I can stand it no longer. Everything goes in time of war, does it not, Madame?" And then casting a comprehensive glance around, he added: "In moments like this, one can but be pleased to find people who are obliging."

He had a newspaper which he spread out on his knees, that no spot might come to his pantaloons, and upon the point of a knife that he always carried

in his pocket, he took up a leg all glistening with jelly, put it between his teeth and masticated it with a satisfaction so evident that there ran through the carriage a great sigh of distress.

Then Ball-of-Fat, in a sweet and humble voice, proposed that the two sisters partake of her collation. They both accepted instantly and, without raising their eyes, began to eat very quickly, after stammering their thanks. Cornudet no longer refused the offers of his neighbor, and they formed with the sisters a sort of table, by spreading out some newspapers upon their knees.

The mouths opened and shut without ceasing, they masticated, swallowed, gulping ferociously. Loiseau in his corner was working hard and, in a low voice, was trying to induce his wife to follow his example. She resisted for a long time; then, when a drawn sensation ran through her body, she yielded. Her husband, rounding his phrase, asked their "charming companion" if he might be allowed to offer a little piece to Madame Loiseau.

She replied: "Why, yes, certainly, sir," with an amiable smile, as she passed the dish.

An embarrassing thing confronted them when they opened the first bottle of Bordeaux: they had but one cup. Each passed it after having tasted. Cornudet alone, for politeness without doubt, placed his lips at the spot left humid by his fair neighbor.

Then, surrounded by people eating, suffocated by the odors of the food, the Count and Countess de Breville, as well as Madame and M. Carré-Lamadon, were suffering that odious torment which has preserved the name of Tantalus. Suddenly the young

wife of the manufacturer gave forth such a sigh that all heads were turned in her direction; she was as white as the snow without; her eyes closed, her head drooped; she had lost consciousness. Her husband, much excited, implored the help of everybody. Each lost his head completely, until the elder of the two sisters, holding the head of the sufferer, slipped Ball-of-Fat's cup between her lips and forced her to swallow a few drops of wine. The pretty little lady revived, opened her eyes, smiled, and declared in a dying voice that she felt very well now. But, in order that the attack might not return, the sister urged her to drink a full glass of Bordeaux, and added: "It is just hunger, nothing more."

Then Ball-of-Fat, blushing and embarrassed, looked at the four travelers who had fasted and stammered: "Goodness knows! if I dared to offer anything to these gentlemen and ladies, I would—" Then she was silent, as if fearing an insult. Loiseau took up the word: "Ah! certainly, in times like these all the world are brothers and ought to aid each other. Come, ladies, without ceremony; why the devil not accept? We do not know whether we shall even find a house where we can pass the night. At the pace we are going now, we shall not reach Tôtes before noon to-morrow—"

They still hesitated, no one daring to assume the responsibility of a "Yes." The Count decided the question. He turned toward the fat, intimidated girl and, taking on a grand air of condescension, he said to her:

"We accept with gratitude, Madame."

It is the first step that counts. The Rubicon passed,

one lends himself to the occasion squarely. The basket was stripped. It still contained a *pate de foie gras,* a *pâté* of larks, a piece of smoked tongue, some preserved pears, a loaf of hard bread, some wafers, and a full cup of pickled gherkins and onions, of which crudities Ball-of-Fat, like all women, was extremely fond.

They could not eat this girl's provisions without speaking to her. And so they chatted, with reserve at first; then, as she carried herself well, with more abandon. The ladies De Breville and Carré-Lamadon, who were acquainted with all the ins and outs of good-breeding, were gracious with a certain delicacy. The Countess, especially, showed that amiable condescension of very noble ladies who do not fear being soiled by contact with anyone, and was charming. But the great Madame Loiseau, who had the soul of a plebeian, remained crabbed, saying little and eating much.

The conversation was about the war, naturally. They related the horrible deeds of the Prussians, the brave acts of the French; and all of them, although running away, did homage to those who stayed behind. Then personal stories began to be told, and Ball-of-Fat related, with sincere emotion, and in the heated words that such girls sometimes use in expressing their natural feelings, how she had left Rouen:

"I believed at first that I could remain," said she. "I had my house full of provisions, and I preferred to feed a few soldiers rather than expatriate myself, to go I knew not where. But as soon as I saw them, those Prussians, that was too much for me!

they made my blood boil with anger, and I wept for very shame all day long. Oh! if I were only a man! I watched them from my windows, the great porkers with their pointed helmets, and my maid held my hands to keep me from throwing the furniture down upon them. Then one of them came to lodge at my house; I sprang at his throat the first thing; they are no more difficult to strangle than other people. And I should have put an end to that one then and there had they not pulled me away by the hair. After that, it was necessary to keep out of sight. And finally, when I found an opportunity, I left town and—here I am!"

They congratulated her. She grew in the estimation of her companions, who had not shown themselves so hot-brained, and Cornudet, while listening to her, took on the approving, benevolent smile of an apostle, as a priest would if he heard a devotee praise God, for the long-bearded democrats have a monopoly of patriotism, as the men in cassocks have of religion. In his turn he spoke, in a doctrinal tone, with the emphasis of a proclamation such as we see pasted on the walls about town, and finished by a bit of eloquence whereby he gave that "scamp of a Badinguet" a good lashing.

Then Ball-of-Fat was angry, for she was a Bonapartist. She grew redder than a cherry and, stammering with indignation, said:

"I would like to have seen you in his place, you other people. Then everything would have been quite right; oh, yes! It is you who have betrayed this man! One would never have had to leave France if it had been governed by blackguards like you!"

Cornudet, undisturbed, preserved a disdainful, superior smile, but all felt that the high note had been struck, until the Count, not without some difficulty, calmed the exasperated girl and proclaimed with a manner of authority that all sincere opinions should be respected. But the Countess and the manufacturer's wife, who had in their souls an unreasonable hatred for the people that favor a Republic, and the same instinctive tenderness that all women have for a decorative, despotic government, felt themselves drawn, in spite of themselves, toward this prostitute so full of dignity, whose sentiments so strongly resembled their own.

The basket was empty. By ten o'clock they had easily exhausted the contents and regretted that there was not more. Conversation continued for some time, but a little more coldly since they had finished eating.

The night fell, the darkness little by little became profound, and the cold, felt more during digestion, made Ball-of-Fat shiver in spite of her plumpness. Then Madame de Breville offered her the little foot-stove, in which the fuel had been renewed many times since morning; she accepted it immediately, for her feet were becoming numb with cold. The ladies Carré-Lamadon and Loiseau gave theirs to the two religious sisters.

The driver had lighted his lanterns. They shone out with a lively glimmer showing a cloud of foam beyond, the sweat of the horses; and, on both sides of the way, the snow seemed to roll itself along under the moving reflection of the lights.

Inside the carriage one could distinguish nothing. But a sudden movement seemed to be made between

Ball-of-Fat and Cornudet; and Loiseau, whose eye penetrated the shadow, believed that he saw the big-bearded man start back quickly as if he had received a swift, noiseless blow.

Then some twinkling points of fire appeared in the distance along the road. It was Tôtes. They had traveled eleven hours, which, with the two hours given to resting and feeding the horses, made thirteen. They entered the town and stopped before the Hotel of Commerce.

The carriage door opened! A well-known sound gave the travelers a start; it was the scabbard of a sword hitting the ground. Immediately a German voice was heard in the darkness.

Although the diligence was not moving, no one offered to alight, fearing some one might be waiting to murder them as they stepped out. Then the conductor appeared, holding in his hand one of the lanterns which lighted the carriage to its depth, and showed the two rows of frightened faces, whose mouths were open and whose eyes were wide with surprise and fear.

Outside beside the driver, in plain sight, stood a German officer, an excessively tall young man, thin and blond, squeezed into his uniform like a girl in a corset, and wearing on his head a flat, oilcloth cap which made him resemble the porter of an English hotel. His enormous mustache, of long straight hairs, growing gradually thin at each side and terminating in a single blond thread so fine that one could not perceive where it ended, seemed to weigh heavily on the corners of his mouth and, drawing down the cheeks, left a decided wrinkle about the lips.

In Alsatian French, he invited the travelers to come in, saying in a suave tone: "Will you descend, gentlemen and ladies?"

The two good sisters were the first to obey, with the docility of saints accustomed ever to submission. The Count and Countess then appeared, followed by the manufacturer and his wife; then Loiseau, pushing ahead of him his larger half. The last-named, as he set foot on the earth, said to the officer: "Good evening, sir," more as a measure of prudence than politeness. The officer, insolent as all-powerful people usually are, looked at him without a word.

Ball-of-Fat and Cornudet, although nearest the door, were the last to descend, grave and haughty before the enemy. The fat girl tried to control herself and be calm. The democrat waved a tragic hand and his long beard seemed to tremble a little and grow redder. They wished to preserve their dignity, comprehending that in such meetings as these they represented in some degree their great country, and somewhat disgusted with the docility of her companions, the fat girl tried to show more pride than her neighbors, the honest women, and, as she felt that some one should set an example, she continued her attitude of resistance assumed at the beginning of the journey.

They entered the vast kitchen of the inn, and the German, having demanded their traveling papers signed by the General-in-chief (in which the name, the description, and profession of each traveler was mentioned), and having examined them all critically, comparing the people and their signatures, said: "It is quite right," and went out.

Then they breathed. They were still hungry and supper was ordered. A half hour was necessary to prepare it, and while two servants were attending to this they went to their rooms. They found them along a corridor which terminated in a large glazed door.

Finally, they sat down at table, when the proprietor of the inn himself appeared. He was a former horse merchant, a large, asthmatic man, with a constant wheezing and rattling in his throat. His father had left him the name of Follenvie. He asked:

"Is Miss Elizabeth Rousset here?"

Ball-of-Fat started as she answered: "It is I."

"The Prussian officer wishes to speak with you immediately."

"With me?"

"Yes, that is, if you are Miss Elizabeth Rousset."

She was disturbed, and reflecting for an instant, declared flatly:

"That is my name, but I shall not go."

A stir was felt around her; each discussed and tried to think of the cause of this order. The Count approached her, saying:

"You are wrong, Madame, for your refusal may lead to considerable difficulty, not only for yourself, but for all your companions. It is never worth while to resist those in power. This request cannot assuredly bring any danger; it is, without doubt, about some forgotten formality."

Everybody agreed with him, asking, begging, beseeching her to go, and at last they convinced her that it was best; they all feared the complications that might result from disobedience. She finally said:

"It is for you that I do this, you understand."

The Countess took her by the hand, saying: "And we are grateful to you for it."

She went out. They waited before sitting down at table.

Each one regretted not having been sent for in the place of this violent, irascible girl, and mentally prepared some platitudes, in case they should be called in their turn.

But at the end of ten minutes she reappeared, out of breath, red to suffocation, and exasperated. She stammered: "Oh! the rascal! the rascal!"

All gathered around to learn something, but she said nothing; and when the Count insisted, she responded with great dignity: "No, it does not concern you; I can say nothing."

Then they all seated themselves around a high soup tureen whence came the odor of cabbage. In spite of alarm, the supper was gay. The cider was good, the beverage Loiseau and the good sisters took as a means of economy. The others called for wine; Cornudet demanded beer. He had a special fashion of uncorking the bottle, making froth on the liquid, carefully filling the glass and then holding it before the light to better appreciate the color. When he drank, his great beard, which still kept some of the foam of his beloved beverage, seemed to tremble with tenderness; his eyes were squinted, in order not to lose sight of his tipple, and he had the unique air of fulfilling the function for which he was born. One would say that there was in his mind a meeting, like that of affinities, between the two great passions that occupied his life — Pale Ale and Revolutions; and

assuredly he could not taste the one without thinking of the other.

Mr. and Mrs. Follenvie dined at the end of the table. The man, rattling like a cracked locomotive, had too much trouble in breathing to talk while eating, but his wife was never silent. She told all her impressions at the arrival of the Prussians, what they did, what they said, reviling them because they cost her some money, and because she had two sons in the army. She addressed herself especially to the Countess, flattered by being able to talk with a lady of quality.

When she lowered her voice to say some delicate thing, her husband would interrupt, from time to time, with: "You had better keep silent, Madame Follenvie." But she paid no attention, continuing in this fashion:

"Yes, Madame, those people there not only eat our potatoes and pork, but our pork and potatoes. And it must not be believed that they are at all proper — oh, no! such filthy things they do, saving the respect I owe to you! And if you could see them exercise for hours in the day! They are all there in the field, marching ahead, then marching back, turning here and turning there. They might be cultivating the land, or at least working on the roads of their own country! But no, Madame, these military men are profitable to no one. Poor people have to feed them, or perhaps be murdered! I am only an old woman without education, it is true, but when I see some endangering their constitutions by raging from morning to night, I say: When there are so many people found to be useless, how un-

necessary it is for others to take so much trouble to be nuisances! Truly, is it not an abomination to kill people, whether they be Prussian, or English, or Polish, or French? If one man revenges himself upon another who has done him some injury, it is wicked and he is punished; but when they exterminate our boys, as if they were game, with guns, they give decorations, indeed, to the one who destroys the most! Now, you see, I can never understand that, never!"

Cornudet raised his voice: "War is a barbarity when one attacks a peaceable neighbor, but a sacred duty when one defends his country."

The old woman lowered her head:

"Yes, when one defends himself, it is another thing; but why not make it a duty to kill all the kings who make these wars for their pleasure?"

Cornudet's eyes flashed. "Bravo, my countrywoman!" said he.

Mr. Carré-Lamadon reflected profoundly. Although he was prejudiced as a Captain of Industry, the good sense of this peasant woman made him think of the opulence that would be brought into the country were the idle and consequently mischievous hands, and the troops which were now maintained in unproductiveness, employed in some great industrial work that it would require centuries to achieve.

Loiseau, leaving his place, went to speak with the innkeeper in a low tone of voice. The great man laughed, shook, and squeaked, his corpulence quivered with joy at the jokes of his neighbor, and he bought of him six cases of wine for spring, after the Prussians had gone.

As soon as supper was finished, as they were worn out with fatigue, they retired.

However, Loiseau, who had observed things, after getting his wife to bed, glued his eye and then his ear to a hole in the wall, to try and discover what are known as "the mysteries of the corridor."

At the end of about an hour, he heard a groping, and, looking quickly, he perceived Ball-of-Fat, who appeared still more plump in a blue cashmere negligée trimmed with white lace. She had a candle in her hand and was directing her steps toward the great door at the end of the corridor. But a door at the side opened, and when she returned at the end of some minutes Cornudet, in his suspenders, followed her. They spoke low, then they stopped. Ball-of-Fat seemed to be defending the entrance to her room with energy. Loiseau, unfortunately, could not hear all their words, but, finally, as they raised their voices, he was able to catch a few. Cornudet insisted with vivacity. He said:

"Come, now, you are a silly woman; what harm can be done?"

She had an indignant air in responding: "No, my dear, there are moments when such things are out of place. Here it would be a shame."

He doubtless did not comprehend and asked why. Then she cried out, raising her voice still more:

"Why? you do not see why? When there are Prussians in the house, in the very next room, perhaps?"

He was silent. This patriotic shame of the harlot, who would not suffer his caress so near the enemy,

FROM AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY P. SCHMAUS.

"No, my dear, there are moments when such things are out of place."

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must have awakened the latent dignity in his heart, for after simply kissing her, he went back to his own door with a bound.

Loiseau, much excited, left the aperture, cut a caper in his room, put on his pajamas, turned back the clothes that covered the bony carcass of his companion, whom he awakened with a kiss, murmuring: "Do you love me, dearie?"

Then all the house was still. And immediately there arose somewhere, from an uncertain quarter, which might be the cellar but was quite as likely to be the garret, a powerful snoring, monotonous and regular, a heavy, prolonged sound, like a great kettle under pressure. Mr. Follenvie was asleep.

As they had decided that they would set out at eight o'clock the next morning, they all collected in the kitchen. But the carriage, the roof of which was covered with snow, stood undisturbed in the courtyard, without horses and without a conductor. They sought him in vain in the stables, in the hay, and in the coach-house. Then they resolved to scour the town, and started out. They found themselves in a square, with a church at one end and some low houses on either side, where they perceived some Prussian soldiers. The first one they saw was paring potatoes. The second, further off, was cleaning the hairdresser's shop. Another, bearded to the eyes, was tending a troublesome brat, cradling it and trying to appease it; and the great peasant women, whose husbands were "away in the army," indicated by signs to their obedient conquerors the work they wished to have done: cutting wood, cooking the soup, grinding the coffee, or what not. One of them

even washed the linen of his hostess, an impotent old grandmother.

The Count, astonished, asked questions of the beadle who came out of the rectory. The old man responded:

"Oh! those men are not wicked; they are not the Prussians we hear about. They are from far off, I know not where; and they have left wives and children in their country; it is not amusing to them, this war, I can tell you! I am sure they also weep for their homes, and that it makes as much sorrow among them as it does among us. Here, now, there is not so much unhappiness for the moment, because the soldiers do no harm and they work as if they were in their own homes. You see, sir, among poor people it is necessary that they aid one another. These are the great traits which war develops."

Cornudet, indignant at the cordial relations between the conquerors and the conquered, preferred to shut himself up in the inn. Loiseau had a joke for the occasion: "They will repeople the land."

Mr. Carré-Lamadon had a serious word: "They try to make amends."

But they did not find the driver. Finally, they discovered him in a *café* of the village, sitting at table fraternally with the officer of ordnance. The Count called out to him:

"Were you not ordered to be ready at eight o'clock?"

"Well, yes; but another order has been given me since."

"By whom?"

"Faith! the Prussian commander."

"What was it?"

"Not to harness at all."

"Why?"

"I know nothing about it. Go and ask him. They tell me not to harness, and I don't harness. That's all."

"Did he give you the order himself?"

"No, sir, the innkeeper gave the order for him."

"When was that?"

"Last evening, as I was going to bed."

The three men returned, much disturbed. They asked for Mr. Follenvie, but the servant answered that that gentleman, because of his asthma, never rose before ten o'clock. And he had given strict orders not to be wakened before that, except in case of fire.

They wished to see the officer, but that was absolutely impossible, since, while he lodged at the inn, Mr. Follenvie alone was authorized to speak to him upon civil affairs. So they waited. The women went up to their rooms again and occupied themselves with futile tasks.

Cornudet installed himself near the great chimney in the kitchen, where there was a good fire burning. He ordered one of the little tables to be brought from the *café*, then a can of beer, he then drew out his pipe, which plays among democrats a part almost equal to his own, because in serving Cornudet it was serving its country. It was a superb pipe, an admirably colored meerschaum, as black as the teeth of its master, but perfumed, curved, glistening, easy to the hand, completing his physiognomy. And he remained motionless, his eyes as much fixed upon the flame of the fire as upon his favorite tipple and its frothy

crown; and each time that he drank, he passed his long, thin fingers through his scanty, gray hair, with an air of satisfaction, after which he sucked in his mustache fringed with foam.

Loiseau, under the pretext of stretching his legs, went to place some wine among the retailers of the country. The Count and the manufacturer began to talk politics. They could foresee the future of France. One of them believed in an Orléans, the other in some unknown savior for the country, a hero who would reveal himself when all were in despair: a Guesclin, or a Joan of Arc, perhaps, or would it be another Napoleon First? Ah! if the Prince Imperial were not so young!

Cornudet listened to them and smiled like one who holds the word of destiny. His pipe perfumed the kitchen.

As ten o'clock struck, Mr. Follenvie appeared. They asked him hurried questions; but he could only repeat two or three times without variation, these words:

"The officer said to me: 'Mr. Follenvie, you see to it that the carriage is not harnessed for those travelers to-morrow. I do not wish them to leave without my order. That is sufficient.'"

Then they wished to see the officer. The Count sent him his card, on which Mr. Carré-Lamadon wrote his name and all his titles. The Prussian sent back word that he would meet the two gentlemen after he had breakfasted, that is to say, about one o'clock.

The ladies reappeared and ate a little something, despite their disquiet. Ball-of-Fat seemed ill and prodigiously troubled.

They were finishing their coffee when the word came that the officer was ready to meet the gentlemen. Loiseau joined them; but when they tried to enlist Cornudet, to give more solemnity to their proceedings, he declared proudly that he would have nothing to do with the Germans; and he betook himself to his chimney corner and ordered another liter of beer.

The three men mounted the staircase and were introduced to the best room of the inn, where the officer received them, stretched out in an armchair, his feet on the mantelpiece, smoking a long, porcelain pipe, and enveloped in a flamboyant dressing-gown, appropriated, without doubt, from some dwelling belonging to a common citizen of bad taste. He did not rise, nor greet them in any way, not even looking at them. It was a magnificent display of natural blackguardism transformed into the military victor.

At the expiration of some moments, he asked: "What is it you wish?"

The Count became spokesman: "We desire to go on our way, sir."

"No."

"May I ask the cause of this refusal?"

"Because I do not wish it."

"But, I would respectfully observe to you, sir, that your General-in-chief gave us permission to go to Dieppe; and I know of nothing we have done to merit your severity."

"I do not wish it—that is all; you can go."

All three having bowed, retired.

The afternoon was lamentable. They could not understand this caprice of the German; and the most

singular ideas would come into their heads to trouble them. Everybody stayed in the kitchen and discussed the situation endlessly, imagining all sorts of unlikely things. Perhaps they would be retained as hostages —but to what end?—or taken prisoners—or rather a considerable ransom might be demanded. At this thought a panic prevailed. The richest were the most frightened, already seeing themselves constrained to pay for their lives with sacks of gold poured into the hands of this insolent soldier. They racked their brains to think of some acceptable falsehoods to conceal their riches and make them pass themselves off for poor people, very poor people. Loiseau took off the chain to his watch and hid it away in his pocket. The falling night increased their apprehensions. The lamp was lighted, and as there was still two hours before dinner, Madame Loiseau proposed a game of Thirty-one. It would be a diversion. They accepted. Cornudet himself, having smoked out his pipe, took part for politeness.

The Count shuffled the cards, dealt, and Ball-of-Fat had thirty-one at the outset; and immediately the interest was great enough to appease the fear that haunted their minds. Then Cornudet perceived that the house of Loiseau was given to tricks.

As they were going to the dinner table, Mr. Follenvie again appeared, and, in wheezing, rattling voice, announced:

"The Prussian officer orders me to ask Miss Elizabeth Rousset if she has yet changed her mind."

Ball-of-Fat remained standing and was pale; then suddenly becoming crimson, such a stifling anger took possession of her that she could not speak. But

finally she flashed out: "You may say to the dirty beast, that idiot, that carrion of a Prussian, that I shall never change it; you understand, never, never, never!"

The great innkeeper went out. Then Ball-of-Fat was immediately surrounded, questioned, and solicited by all to disclose the mystery of his visit. She resisted, at first, but soon becoming exasperated, she said: "What does he want? You really want to know what he wants? He wants to sleep with me."

Everybody was choked for words, and indignation was rife. Cornudet broke his glass, so violently did he bring his fist down upon the table. There was a clamor of censure against this ignoble soldier, a blast of anger, a union of all for resistance, as if a demand had been made on each one of the party for the sacrifice exacted of her. The Count declared with disgust that those people conducted themselves after the fashion of the ancient barbarians. The women, especially, showed to Ball-of-Fat a most energetic and tender commiseration. The good sisters who only showed themselves at mealtime, lowered their heads and said nothing.

They all dined, nevertheless, when the first *furore* had abated. But there was little conversation; they were thinking.

The ladies retired early, and the men, all smoking, organized a game at cards to which Mr. Follenvie was invited, as they intended to put a few casual questions to him on the subject of conquering the resistance of this officer. But he thought of nothing but the cards and, without listening or answering,

would keep repeating: "To the game, sirs, to the game." His attention was so taken that he even forgot to expectorate, which must have put him some points to the good with the organ in his breast. His whistling lungs ran the whole asthmatic scale, from deep, profound tones to the sharp rustiness of a young cock essaying to crow.

He even refused to retire when his wife, who had fallen asleep previously, came to look for him. She went away alone, for she was an "early bird," always up with the sun, while her husband was a "night owl," always ready to pass the night with his friends. He cried out to her: "Leave my creamed chicken before the fire!" and then went on with his game. When they saw that they could get nothing from him, they declared that it was time to stop, and each sought his bed.

They all rose rather early the next day, with an undefined hope of getting away, which desire the terror of passing another day in that horrible inn greatly increased.

Alas! the horses remained in the stable and the driver was invisible. For want of better employment, they went out and walked around the carriage.

The breakfast was very doleful; and it became apparent that a coldness had arisen toward Ball-of-Fat, and that the night, which brings counsel, had slightly modified their judgments. They almost wished now that the Prussian had secretly found this girl, in order to give her companions a pleasant surprise in the morning. What could be more simple? Besides, who would know anything about it? She could save appearances by telling the officer that she took pity

on their distress. To her, it would make so little difference!

No one had avowed these thoughts yet.

In the afternoon, as they were almost perishing from *ennui,* the Count proposed that they take a walk around the village. Each wrapped up warmly and the little party set out, with the exception of Cornudet, who preferred to remain near the fire, and the good sisters, who passed their time in the church or at the curate's.

The cold, growing more intense every day, cruelly pinched their noses and ears; their feet became so numb that each step was torture; and when they came to a field it seemed to them frightfully sad under this limitless white, so that everybody returned immediately, with hearts hard pressed and souls congealed.

The four women walked ahead, the three gentlemen followed just behind. Loiseau, who understood the situation, asked suddenly if they thought that girl there was going to keep them long in such a place as this. The Count, always courteous, said that they could not exact from a woman a sacrifice so hard, unless it should come of her own will. Mr. Carré-Lamadon remarked that if the French made their return through Dieppe, as they were likely to, a battle would surely take place at Tôtes. This reflection made the two others anxious.

"If we could only get away on foot," said Loiseau.

The Count shrugged his shoulders: "How can we think of it in this snow? and with our wives?" he said. "And then, we should be pursued and

caught in ten minutes and led back prisoners at the mercy of these soldiers."

It was true, and they were silent.

The ladies talked of their clothes, but a certain constraint seemed to disunite them. Suddenly at the end of the street, the officer appeared. His tall, wasp-like figure in uniform was outlined upon the horizon formed by the snow, and he was marching with knees apart, a gait particularly military, which is affected that they may not spot their carefully blackened boots.

He bowed in passing near the ladies and looked disdainfully at the men, who preserved their dignity by not seeing him, except Loiseau, who made a motion toward raising his hat.

Ball-of-Fat reddened to the ears, and the three married women resented the great humiliation of being thus met by this soldier in the company of this girl whom he had treated so cavalierly.

But they spoke of him, of his figure and his face. Madame Carré-Lamadon, who had known many officers and considered herself a connoisseur of them, found this one not at all bad; she regretted even that he was not French, because he would make such a pretty hussar, one all the women would rave over.

Again in the house, no one knew what to do. Some sharp words, even, were said about things very insignificant. The dinner was silent, and almost immediately after it, each one went to his room to kill time in sleep.

They descended the next morning with weary faces and exasperated hearts. The women scarcely spoke to Ball-of-Fat.

A bell began to ring. It was for a baptism. The fat girl had a child being brought up among the peasants of Yvetot. She had not seen it for a year, or thought of it; but now the idea of a child being baptized threw into her heart a sudden and violent tenderness for her own, and she strongly wished to be present at the ceremony.

As soon as she was gone, everybody looked at each other, then pulled their chairs together, for they thought that finally something should be decided upon. Loiseau had an inspiration: it was to hold Ball-of-Fat alone and let the others go.

Mr. Follenvie was charged with the commission, but he returned almost immediately, for the German, who understood human nature, had put him out. He pretended that he would retain everybody so long as his desire was not satisfied.

Then the commonplace nature of Mrs. Loiseau burst out with:

"Well, we are not going to stay here to die of old age. Since it is the trade of this creature to accommodate herself to all kinds, I fail to see how she has the right to refuse one more than another. I can tell you she has received all she could find in Rouen, even the coachmen! Yes, Madame, the prefect's coachman! I know him very well, for he bought his wine at our house. And to think that to-day we should be drawn into this embarrassment by this affected woman, this minx! For my part, I find that this officer conducts himself very well. He has perhaps suffered privations for a long time; and doubtless he would have preferred us three; but no, he is contented with common property. He respects mar-

ried women. And we must remember too that he is master. He has only to say 'I wish,' and he could take us by force with his soldiers."

The two women had a cold shiver. Pretty Mrs. Carré-Lamadon's eyes grew brilliant and she became a little pale, as if she saw herself already taken by force by the officer.

The men met and discussed the situation. Loiseau, furious, was for delivering "the wretch" bound hand and foot to the enemy. But the Count, descended through three generations of ambassadors, and endowed with the temperament of a diplomatist, was the advocate of ingenuity.

"It is best to decide upon something," said he. Then they conspired.

The women kept together, the tone of their voices was lowered, each gave advice and the discussion was general. Everything was very harmonious. The ladies especially found delicate shades and charming subtleties of expression for saying the most unusual things. A stranger would have understood nothing, so great was the precaution of language observed. But the light edge of modesty, with which every woman of the world is barbed, only covers the surface; they blossom out in a scandalous adventure of this kind, being deeply amused and feeling themselves in their element, mixing love with sensuality as a greedy cook prepares supper for his master.

Even gaiety returned, so funny did the whole story seem to them at last. The Count found some of the jokes a little off color, but they were so well told that he was forced to smile. In his turn, Loiseau came out with some still bolder tales, and yet nobody was

wounded. The brutal thought, expressed by his wife, dominated all minds: "Since it is her trade, why should she refuse this one more than another?" The genteel Mrs. Carré-Lamadon seemed to think that in her place, she would refuse this one less than some others.

They prepared the blockade at length, as if they were about to surround a fortress. Each took some rôle to play, some arguments he would bring to bear, some maneuvers that he would endeavor to put into execution. They decided on the plan of attack, the ruse to employ, the surprise of assault, that should force this living citadel to receive the enemy in her room.

Cornudet remained apart from the rest, and was a stranger to the whole affair.

So entirely were their minds distracted that they did not hear Ball-of-Fat enter. The Count uttered a light "Ssh!" which turned all eyes in her direction. There she was. The abrupt silence and a certain embarrassment hindered them from speaking to her at first. The Countess, more accustomed to the duplicity of society than the others, finally inquired:

"Was it very amusing, that baptism?"

The fat girl, filled with emotion, told them all about it, the faces, the attitudes, and even the appearance of the church. She added: "It is good to pray sometimes."

And up to the time for luncheon these ladies continued to be amiable toward her, in order to increase her docility and her confidence in their counsel. At the table they commenced the approach. This was in the shape of a vague conversation upon devotion.

They cited ancient examples: Judith and Holophernes, then, without reason, Lucrece and Sextus, and Cleopatra obliging all the generals of the enemy to pass by her couch and reducing them in servility to slaves. Then they brought out a fantastic story, hatched in the imagination of these ignorant millionaires, where the women of Rome went to Capua for the purpose of lulling Hannibal to sleep in their arms, and his lieutenants and phalanxes of mercenaries as well. They cited all the women who have been taken by conquering armies, making a battlefield of their bodies, making them also a weapon, and a means of success; and all those hideous and detestable beings who have conquered by their heroic caresses, and sacrificed their chastity to vengeance or a beloved cause. They even spoke in veiled terms of that great English family which allowed one of its women to be inoculated with a horrible and contagious disease in order to transmit it to Bonaparte, who was miraculously saved by a sudden illness at the hour of the fatal rendezvous.

And all this was related in an agreeable, temperate fashion, except as it was enlivened by the enthusiasm deemed proper to excite emulation.

One might finally have believed that the sole duty of woman here below was a sacrifice of her person, and a continual abandonment to soldierly caprices.

The two good sisters seemed not to hear, lost as they were in profound thought. Ball-of-Fat said nothing.

During the whole afternoon they let her reflect. But, in the place of calling her "Madame" as they had up to this time, they simply called her "Mademoiselle" without knowing exactly why, as if they had

a desire to put her down a degree in their esteem, which she had taken by storm, and make her feel her shameful situation.

The moment supper was served, Mr. Follenvie appeared with his old phrase: "The Prussian officer orders me to ask if Miss Elizabeth Rousset has yet changed her mind."

Ball-of-Fat responded dryly: "No, sir."

But at dinner the coalition weakened. Loiseau made three unhappy remarks. Each one beat his wits for new examples but found nothing; when the Countess, without premeditation, perhaps feeling some vague need of rendering homage to religion, asked the elder of the good sisters to tell them some great deeds in the lives of the saints. It appeared that many of their acts would have been considered crimes in our eyes; but the Church gave absolution of them readily, since they were done for the glory of God, or for the good of all. It was a powerful argument; the Countess made the most of it.

Thus it may be by one of those tacit understandings, or the veiled complacency in which anyone who wears the ecclesiastical garb excels, it may be simply from the effect of a happy unintelligence, a helpful stupidity, but in fact the religious sister lent a formidable support to the conspiracy. They had thought her timid, but she showed herself courageous, verbose, even violent. She was not troubled by the chatter of the casuist; her doctrine seemed a bar of iron; her faith never hesitated; her conscience had no scruples. She found the sacrifice of Abraham perfectly simple, for she would immediately kill father or mother on an order from on high. And nothing, in

her opinion, could displease the Lord, if the intention was laudable. The Countess put to use the authority of her unwitting accomplice, and added to it the edifying paraphrase and axiom of Jesuit morals: "The end justifies the means."

Then she asked her: "Then, my sister, do you think that God accepts intentions, and pardons the deed when the motive is pure?"

"Who could doubt it, Madame? An action blamable in itself often becomes meritorious by the thought it springs from."

And they continued thus, unraveling the will of God, foreseeing his decisions, making themselves interested in things that, in truth, they would never think of noticing. All this was guarded, skillful, discreet. But each word of the saintly sister in a cap helped to break down the resistance of the unworthy courtesan. Then the conversation changed a little, the woman of the chaplet speaking of the houses of her order, of her Superior, of herself, of her dainty neighbor, the dear sister Saint-Nicephore. They had been called to the hospitals of Havre to care for the hundreds of soldiers stricken with smallpox. They depicted these miserable creatures, giving details of the malady. And while they were stopped, *en route,* by the caprice of this Prussian officer, a great number of Frenchmen might die, whom perhaps they could have saved! It was a specialty with her, caring for soldiers. She had been in Crimea, in Italy, in Austria, and, in telling of her campaigns, she revealed herself as one of those religious aids to drums and trumpets, who seem made to follow camps, pick up the wounded in the thick of battle, and, better

than an officer, subdue with a word great bands of undisciplined recruits. A true, good sister of the rataplan, whose ravaged face, marked with innumerable scars, appeared the image of the devastation of war.

No one could speak after her, so excellent seemed the effect of her words.

As soon as the repast was ended they quickly went up to their rooms, with the purpose of not coming down the next day until late in the morning.

The luncheon was quiet. They had given the grain of seed time to germinate and bear fruit. The Countess proposed that they take a walk in the afternoon. The Count, being agreeably inclined, gave an arm to Ball-of-Fat and walked behind the others with her. He talked to her in a familiar, paternal tone, a little disdainful, after the manner of men having girls in their employ, calling her "my dear child," from the height of his social position, of his undisputed honor. He reached the vital part of the question at once:

"Then you prefer to leave us here, exposed to the violences which follow a defeat, rather than consent to a favor which you have so often given in your life?"

Ball-of-Fat answered nothing.

Then he tried to reach her through gentleness, reason, and then the sentiments. He knew how to remain "The Count," even while showing himself gallant or complimentary, or very amiable if it became necessary. He exalted the service that she would render them, and spoke of their appreciation; then suddenly became gaily familiar, and said:

"And you know, my dear, it would be something for him to boast of that he had known a pretty girl; something it is difficult to find in his country."

Ball-of-Fat did not answer but joined the rest of the party. As soon as they entered the house she went to her room and did not appear again. The disquiet was extreme. What were they to do? If she continued to resist, what an embarrassment!

The dinner hour struck. They waited in vain. Mr. Follenvie finally entered and said that Miss Rousset was indisposed, and would not be at the table. Everybody pricked up his ears. The Count went to the innkeeper and said in a low voice:

"Is he in there?"

"Yes."

For convenience, he said nothing to his companions, but made a slight sign with his head. Immediately a great sigh of relief went up from every breast and a light appeared in their faces. Loiseau cried out:

"Holy Christopher! I pay for the champagne, if there is any to be found in the establishment." And Mrs. Loiseau was pained to see the proprietor return with four quart bottles in his hands.

Each one had suddenly become communicative and buoyant. A wanton joy filled their hearts. The Count suddenly perceived that Mrs. Carré-Lamadon was charming, the manufacturer paid compliments to the Countess. The conversation was lively, gay, full of touches.

Suddenly Loiseau, with anxious face and hand upraised, called out: "Silence!" Everybody was silent, surprised, already frightened. Then he listened

intently and said: "S-s-sh!" his two eyes and his hands raised toward the ceiling, listening, and then continuing, in his natural voice: "All right! All goes well!"

They failed to comprehend at first, but soon all laughed. At the end of a quarter of an hour he began the same farce again, renewing it occasionally during the whole afternoon. And he pretended to call to some one in the story above, giving him advice in a double meaning, drawn from the fountain-head—the mind of a commercial traveler. For some moments he would assume a sad air, breathing in a whisper: "Poor girl!" Then he would murmur between his teeth, with an appearance of rage: "Ugh! That scamp of a Prussian." Sometimes, at a moment when no more was thought about it, he would say, in an affected voice, many times over: "Enough! enough!" and add, as if speaking to himself: "If we could only see her again, it isn't necessary that he should kill her, the wretch!"

Although these jokes were in deplorable taste, they amused all and wounded no one, for indignation, like other things, depends upon its surroundings, and the atmosphere which had been gradually created around them was charged with sensual thoughts.

At the dessert the women themselves made some delicate and discreet allusions. Their eyes glistened; they had drunk much. The Count, who preserved, even in his flights, his grand appearance of gravity, made a comparison, much relished, upon the subject of those wintering at the pole, and the joy of shipwrecked sailors who saw an opening toward the south.

Loiseau suddenly arose, a glass of champagne in his hand, and said: "I drink to our deliverance." Everybody was on his feet; they shouted in agreement. Even the two good sisters consented to touch their lips to the froth of the wine which they had never before tasted. They declared that it tasted like charged lemonade, only much nicer.

Loiseau resumed: "It is unfortunate that we have no piano, for we might make up a quadrille."

Cornudet had not said a word, nor made a gesture; he appeared plunged in very grave thoughts, and made sometimes a furious motion, so that his great beard seemed to wish to free itself. Finally, toward midnight, as they were separating, Loiseau, who was staggering, touched him suddenly on the stomach and said to him in a stammer: "You are not very funny, this evening; you have said nothing, citizen!" Then Cornudet raised his head brusquely and, casting a brilliant, terrible glance around the company, said: "I tell you all that you have been guilty of infamy!" He rose, went to the door, and again repeated: "Infamy, I say!" and disappeared.

This made a coldness at first. Loiseau, interlocutor, was stupefied; but he recovered immediately and laughed heartily as he said: "He is very green, my friends. He is very green." And then, as they did not comprehend, he told them about the "mysteries of the corridor." Then there was a return of gaiety. The women behaved like lunatics. The Count and Mr. Carré-Lamadon wept from the force of their laughter. They could not believe it.

"How is that? Are you sure?"

"I tell you I saw it."

"And she refused—"

"Yes, because the Prussian officer was in the next room."

"Impossible!"

"I swear it!"

The Count was stifled with laughter. The industrial gentleman held his sides with both hands. Loiseau continued:

"And now you understand why he saw nothing funny this evening! No, nothing at all!" And the three started out half ill, suffocated.

They separated. But Mrs. Loiseau, who was of a spiteful nature, remarked to her husband as they were getting into bed, that "that *grisette*" of a little Carré-Lamadon was yellow with envy all the evening. "You know," she continued, "how some women will take to a uniform, whether it be French or Prussian! It is all the same to them! Oh! what a pity!"

And all night, in the darkness of the corridor, there were to be heard light noises, like whisperings and walking in bare feet, and imperceptible creakings. They did not go to sleep until late, that is sure, for there were threads of light shining under the doors for a long time. The champagne had its effect; they say it troubles sleep.

The next day a clear winter's sun made the snow very brilliant. The diligence, already harnessed, waited before the door, while an army of white pigeons, in their thick plumage, with rose-colored eyes, with a black spot in the center, walked up and down gravely among the legs of the six horses, seeking their livelihood in the manure there scattered.

The driver, enveloped in his sheepskin, had a

lighted pipe under the seat, and all the travelers, radiant, were rapidly packing some provisions for the rest of the journey. They were only waiting for Ball-of-Fat. Finally she appeared.

She seemed a little troubled, ashamed. And she advanced timidly toward her companions, who all, with one motion, turned as if they had not seen her. The Count, with dignity, took the arm of his wife and removed her from this impure contact.

The fat girl stopped, half stupefied; then, plucking up courage, she approached the manufacturer's wife with "Good morning, Madame," humbly murmured. The lady made a slight bow of the head which she accompanied with a look of outraged virtue. Everybody seemed busy, and kept themselves as far from her as if she had had some infectious disease in her skirts. Then they hurried into the carriage, where she came last, alone, and where she took the place she had occupied during the first part of the journey.

They seemed not to see her or know her; although Madame Loiseau, looking at her from afar, said to her husband in a half-tone: "Happily, I don't have to sit beside her."

The heavy carriage began to move and the remainder of the journey commenced. No one spoke at first. Ball-of-Fat dared not raise her eyes. She felt indignant toward all her neighbors, and at the same time humiliated at having yielded to the foul kisses of this Prussian, into whose arms they had hypocritically thrown her.

Then the Countess, turning toward Mrs. Carré-Lamadon, broke the difficult silence:

"I believe you know Madame d'Etrelles?"

"Yes, she is one of my friends."

"What a charming woman!"

"Delightful! A very gentle nature, and well educated, besides; then she is an artist to the tips of her fingers, sings beautifully, and draws to perfection."

The manufacturer chatted with the Count, and in the midst of the rattling of the glass, an occasional word escaped such as "coupon — premium — limit — expiration."

Loiseau, who had pilfered the old pack of cards from the inn, greasy through five years of contact with tables badly cleaned, began a game of bezique with his wife.

The good sisters took from their belt the long rosary which hung there, made together the sign of the cross, and suddenly began to move their lips in a lively manner, hurrying more and more, hastening their vague murmur, as if they were going through the whole of the "Oremus." And from time to time they kissed a medal, made the sign anew, then recommenced their muttering, which was rapid and continued.

Cornudet sat motionless, thinking.

At the end of three hours on the way, Loiseau put up the cards and said: "I am hungry."

His wife drew out a package from whence she brought a piece of cold veal. She cut it evenly in thin pieces and they both began to eat.

"Suppose we do the same," said the Countess.

They consented to it and she undid the provisions prepared for the two couples. It was in one of those dishes whose lid is decorated with a china hare, to

signify that a *pâté* of hare is inside, a succulent dish of pork, where white rivers of lard cross the brown flesh of the game, mixed with some other viands hashed fine. A beautiful square of Gruyère cheese, wrapped in a piece of newspaper, preserved the imprint "divers things" upon the unctuous plate.

The two good sisters unrolled a big sausage which smelled of garlic; and Cornudet plunged his two hands into the vast pockets of his overcoat, at the same time, and drew out four hard eggs and a piece of bread. He removed the shells and threw them in the straw under his feet; then he began to eat the eggs, letting fall on his vast beard some bits of clear yellow, which looked like stars caught there.

Ball-of-Fat, in the haste and distraction of her rising, had not thought of anything; and she looked at them exasperated, suffocating with rage, at all of them eating so placidly. A tumultuous anger swept over her at first, and she opened her mouth to cry out at them, to hurl at them a flood of injury which mounted to her lips; but she could not speak, her exasperation strangled her.

No one looked at her or thought of her. She felt herself drowned in the scorn of these honest scoundrels, who had first sacrificed her and then rejected her, like some improper or useless article. She thought of her great basket full of good things which they had greedily devoured, of her two chickens shining with jelly, of her *pâtés*, her pears, and the four bottles of Bordeaux; and her fury suddenly falling, as a cord drawn too tightly breaks, she felt ready to weep. She made terrible efforts to prevent it, making ugly faces, swallowing her sobs as chil-

dren do, but the tears came and glistened in the corners of her eyes, and then two great drops, detaching themselves from the rest, rolled slowly down her cheeks. Others followed rapidly, running down like little streams of water that filter through rock, and, falling regularly, rebounded upon her breast. She sits erect, her eyes fixed, her face rigid and pale, hoping that no one will notice her.

But the Countess perceives her and tells her husband by a sign. He shrugs his shoulders, as much as to say:

"What would you have me do, it is not my fault."

Mrs. Loiseau indulged in a mute laugh of triumph and murmured:

"She weeps for shame."

The two good sisters began to pray again, after having wrapped in a paper the remainder of their sausage.

Then Cornudet, who was digesting his eggs, extended his legs to the seat opposite, crossed them, folded his arms, smiled like a man who is watching a good farce, and began to whistle the "Marseillaise."

All faces grew dark. The popular song assuredly did not please his neighbors. They became nervous and agitated, having an appearance of wishing to howl, like dogs, when they hear a barbarous organ. He perceived this but did not stop. Sometimes he would hum the words:

"Sacred love of country
Help, sustain th' avenging arm;
Liberty, sweet Liberty
Ever fight, with no alarm."

They traveled fast, the snow being harder. But as far as Dieppe, during the long, sad hours of the journey, across the jolts in the road, through the falling night, in the profound darkness of the carriage, he continued his vengeful, monotonous whistling with a ferocious obstinacy, constraining his neighbors to follow the song from one end to the other, and to recall the words that belonged to each measure.

And Ball-of-Fat wept continually; and sometimes a sob, which she was not able to restrain, echoed between the two rows of people in the shadows.

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